ALA
330
69A

NEW LEGENDS

HERVEY ALLEN

NUNC COGNOSCO EX PARTE

TRENT UNIVERSITY
LIBRARY

MORRIS GRAY
CLASS OF 1877

RELEASED
HARVARD COLLEGE LIBRARY

New Legends

BOOKS BY

HERVEY ALLEN

POETRY

WAMPUM AND OLD GOLD. *Yale University Press, 1921*

THE BRIDE OF HUITZEL, AN AZTEC LEGEND. *James F. Drake, Inc., 1922*

CAROLINA CHANSONS (*With DuBose Heyward*). *The Macmillan Co., 1922*

THE BLINDMAN. (*A reprint.*) *Yale University Press, 1923*

EARTH MOODS AND OTHER POEMS. *Harper & Brothers, 1925*

SONGS FOR ANNETTE. *William Edwin Rudge, 1929*

SARAH SIMON. *Doubleday, Doran & Company, Inc., 1929*

NEW LEGENDS, POEMS. *Farrar & Rinehart, Inc., 1929*

PROSE

TOWARD THE FLAME. *George H. Doran Co., 1926*

ISRAFEL, THE LIFE AND TIMES OF EDGAR ALLAN POE.
2 vols. George H. Doran Co., 1926

POE'S BROTHER (*With Thomas Ollive Mabbott*). *George H. Doran Co., 1926*

New Legends

POEMS BY HERVEY ALLEN

FARRAR & RINEHART
INCORPORATED
ON MURRAY HILL NEW YORK
MCMXXIX

AL735.2.105
LD 32069
HARVARD COLLEGE LIBRARY
MORRIS GRAY FUND

FIRST REGULAR EDITION

COPYRIGHT, 1929
BY FARRAR & RINEHART, INC.

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

COPYRIGHT, 1922, 1923
BY THE POETRY SOCIETY OF SOUTH CAROLINA, INC.

COPYRIGHT, 1929
BY HERVEY ALLEN

COPYRIGHT, 1929
BY DOUBLEDAY, DORAN & COMPANY, INC.

COPYRIGHT, 1929
BY YALE UNIVERSITY PRESS

DEDICATION

TO JOHN LIVINGSTON LOWES

WATER deep-drawn, from springs of Xanadu
Draining through vales of thought worn smooth by time,
The blue-coat boy so loved, I bring to you,
Good baptist in the living source of rhyme.
Whether by hidden sources of the Nile
Or in the page of Purchas it be found,
It must be sought, you know, mile after mile,
By its prophetic voices underground.
Wells that are dug to tap it silt with sand,
Tho' always damply hopeful at the first,
Yet neither avid haste nor toil suffice
To reach that water, not in any land,
Save where the miracle of rare device
Lets fall its shadow on the cure-of-thirst.

HENCE mine must be diminished, something spoiled,
Like water from the Jordan to baptize
A famished soul with dampness, yet I toiled
Like every pilgrim for believing eyes—
So any fragrance of the incense trees,
So moisture faintly fresh with honeydew
Cling to the cruse I bring it in—if these
Diffuse absolving grace from Xanadu,
I shall not think my pilgrimage a shame,
Since you will know at least the stars held true
I marched all night by. Heavy was the toll
The avid, thirsty days took; I went lame
And saved but little home, but take the dole,
Remembering the spring from which it came.

168589

AUTHOR'S NOTE

SOME *of the material included in this volume has appeared elsewhere, but under such varied circumstance, form, and title as to make acknowledgment in detail somewhat confusing here. The coöperation of several editors and publishers for rights to include and other essential assistance in assembling this volume is, nevertheless, very gratefully acknowledged by the author.*

The writing of these poems has ranged over a period of five years and several continents, but the order of their arrangement in these pages has no bearing on the time or the place of their composition. There is no general theme that runs through this book, nor is any particular geographical locality, either sectional or national, peculiarly celebrated. The native home of poetry is the imagination of the poet. These poems have been written with a very specific ideal in mind as to the nature and the limits of that realm. If they owe anything to any other locality, save incidentally, the reader, it is hoped, will not be called upon to exercise a special understanding in order to appreciate it.

Nevertheless, it is with some diffidence, at this time of extreme sectionalism in literary propaganda, that the author confesses he has no claim upon the attention of anyone anywhere, save, perhaps, for what he has written. Common sense, however, dictates that, like every other living writer, he should appear before his indulgent countrymen, if at all, not in

some local disguise but in his true character, that of a citizen of the Republic of Letters. It is hoped that the ensuing pages will confirm any reader that they may happen to interest in an opinion of the author's sincerity on that point.

Nor need anyone, he apprehends, mistake the intent of the book's title. None of these poems are "legends" in a strictly literary or historical sense. They are simply subjective themes which have been seized upon, imagined into an æsthetic whole, and illustrated, as it were, with an extremely objective though generalized imagery. Both the method of treatment and in some cases the themes are extremely old and hallowed ones. The combination of the two, however, has occasionally heretofore, in the hands of others, resulted in something memorably new. Hope springs from this knowledge, and it has again persuaded another poet to essay as well as he can.

CONTENTS

DEDICATION V
AUTHOR'S NOTE VII
INVOCATION—VOICE OF LIFE XI

LEGENDS

I. THE CHILDREN BY THE LAKE OF DREAMS *1*
II. SARAH SIMON, CHARACTER ATLANTEAN *21*
III. HADRIAN AT TIVOLI *75*
IV. THE ISLE OF HORSES *81*
V. DESCENT INTO HADES *89*
VI. THE FORGE IN THE FOREST *109*
VII. KING AGOG'S BED *113*
VIII. EPITHALAMIUM *115*

POEMS ON VARIOUS THEMES

FALL *125*
BALLAD OF THE FRUITLESS PLANT *128*
SYLVAN POOR *132*
THE HOUSE BY THE MARSH *135*
CHICKEN BLOOD *137*
FABLE OF THE DOG AND CAT *139*

CONTENTS

GOAT SONG *141*
DROWNED SAILOR *144*
INDIAN SPRING *145*
FIRST AND SECOND SIGHT *147*
SOUTHWARD HO *148*
PSYCHE *149*
THE STARLING AND THE MAGPIE *151*

LINES ON THE IMAGINATION

PREDICAMENT *155*
LEAVES *158*
REGRETS FOR LOST STARS *160*
GEMINI *162*
CLIO *164*
ILLEGITIMATE *167*
THE ROSE IN AMBER *168*

VOICE OF LIFE

Dear bird, you are the voice of life itself,
A living melody that calls to us
With untaught ecstasy; that sings a joy
Inherited with being, glorious.
Like girls at play, like laughter of a boy,
Your song derides the tired and baffled brain
That thinks itself to death; you sing again
With the immortal freshness of a breath
From morning stars above the mist of pain
That clings to song about the fields of earth.

What dusty thresholds to what vacant ears
Your ecstasy might sweep with song; what dearth
Of music starves them through long, silent years,
Who are eclipsed from you by birth!
Now from this lonely moor you have sprung up
Beyond our need, to pour; pour higher yet
Your melody into that tilted cup
Which all about with clustered gems is set.
Now I can hear it spilling back again,
Melodious excess through my casement bars,
Oh, what delirious madrigals are these
To wither out to nothing twixt the stars!
Such perfect music, and no ideal ear?
Listen! It is the earth that needs to hear.

It is the skylark that has come again
To din his selfless-music through the brain
Of a self-studying, self-tired generation—
The lark, the lark! It is the lark again!
For our whole planetary nation,
Rising out of the grass away from night
To soar beyond earth's shadow into light.

First, moonlight under wings, like poetry,
Shall lift him on bright pinions toward the sun,
Then brighter, clearer, rarer atmospheres,
Bear him to altitudes where dawn's begun,
Until the light, the bird, the song are one.

Why this ethereal flight with loud elation
In the direction of a high escape?
Why is it more than pain a shibboleth
Upon the lips of time? Why is it not
As positive, perpetual a relation
As death is to the scheme? I ask, "Why not?"—
And will you call it an ethereal jape?
Whence is this music that gives hope to thought,
This song, this utter triumph of frail breath,
A pristine voice of life whose source is joy?
Oh, you are young in thought; too old for time,
Who think that bird is a mechanic toy.

We live too much within ourselves, and when
We turn without we seek the world of men,
Where souls wreck their anatomies to buy
The music that pours down out of the sky.

We leave the skylark to the shepherd boy,
And bird and boy are happy in each others'
Happiness that makes them happy brothers.
What rusty hinges break the mind in twain
That cannot open outward into joy!
How dull to shut the skylark from the brain!
It is as tho' in everything that passes
No song was heard, no joyful voice of life;
Thought, the poor dustman, sits and sifts the ashes,
Or mutes some shadow's dirge upon his fife;
Or lives a widower, and dies alone,
Remembering dead feeling, once his wife.
Life has a feeling music like the bird's,
That leaps beyond the candlelight of words;
Leaves the dark moors of earth for whence it came;
Soars into heaven, and achieves the flame.

Dartmoor,
August, 1928

THE CHILDREN BY THE LAKE OF DREAMS

A Persian Fragment

AN ARGUMENT

DURING a period of two and twenty days of rainy weather, while the usual hunting was suspended, Hafiz, court poet to Shah Mansūr of Shiraz, was engaged by his master and patron in a continuous discussion on the nature of love. On the two and twentieth day, at the hour of the evening collation, it was found that no conclusion could be reached, since their respective definitions of "love" were essentially different.

One phase of the argument developed, however, that in the opinion of Hafiz the then frequent troubles in the married state throughout Persia were for the most part due to conditions over which true lovers had no control. Hence, consequent disappointments of the just expectations of wedlock caused the general nuptial disgruntlement of the land.

The Shah, on the contrary, maintained that the prime cause of the general marital discontent among his subjects arose from their too great expectations as to the kind and extent of happiness to be found in marriage, from which an inevitable disillusionment ensued. He furthermore reproached Hafiz with having been the chief instrument of arousing

such undue expectations by the dissemination of romantic poetry.

"This, then," said Hafiz, "returns us to our original discussion as to the nature of love itself."

"Let us agree to waive that," replied the Shah, "and confine ourselves to something more concrete."

"Only lovers are concrete," parried Hafiz.

Having anticipated this reply, the Shah now offered to put at the disposal of the poet two orphans from the seraglio, a perfect boy and girl who had already discovered for each other a natural affection.

"To insure that no untoward conditions shall disappoint them of the greatest possibilities of bliss, let it be recorded," commanded the Shah, "that the entire resources of the kingdom, without let or stint, shall be at the disposal of the Poet Hafiz."

Hafiz, having accepted this proposal, amid the excitement of all those present, the court scribe immediately proceeded to paint a private firman to that effect and submitted it for sealing. Here, however, the Shah saw fit to exercise his divine privilege of the first and last word.

"Let it be further recorded," he now added, "and this time upon my betting tablets, that Hafiz stakes his reputation as a poet, against twelve camel loads of spices, on the happy result of the experiment at the end of a year."

So saying the Shah pressed his signet upon the wax of both the firman and the tablet and departed, remarking privately to the grand vizier who accompanied him that, despite his waiver, the nature of love *was*, nevertheless, involved.

"O Commander of the Faithful," said the vizier, bending low, "deign to instruct thy servant."

But the reply of the Sultan was lost in the depths of the seraglio. Only this fragment of "The Experiment of Hafiz" remains.

THE CHILDREN BY THE LAKE OF DREAMS

A Persian Fragment

Hafiz it was who mixed the poppy drink,
Ammamon tinct with opiate and myrrh,
Fit for a poet's great experiment,
Heavy with drowsiness that could confer
A month of languor and unbroken dream,
An aphrodisiacal condiment
For the two orphans from the Shah's hareem.
Beltar and dark Gulcheranoos
On Bactrian camel backs he had conveyed;
Nested in fleece-lined baskets, and burnoose;
Sleeping with henna'd lips—both boy and maid—
To Aradan beside the Lakes of Khar,
Where the miasmic fox fires wander loose,
Scaring the far-strayed shepherds back to Lar.
There where the Hableh seeps into the waste
Of Kishlak, leaving violets,—to a cave
The whey-faced eunuchs carried them in haste
And left them with three dwarflets and a slave,
With baskets of sweet kickshaws and strange meats,
And coverlets from Cashmere, and soft clothes
White as the blinding cerement that greets
The freezing traveler through Caucasian snows.
This was the subtle magic of the plan:

Scarce had the children wakened in their bed[1]
Than all the dwarflets and the slave began
To say they were in ghost-land and both dead.
This was Al Aaraaf;[2] all that they could see—
The rocks, the dreamful lake, a gloomy mountain—
Would be the same for all eternity,
Still as a lily in a stagnant fountain.
Hafiz has made his slaves a tale rehearse
Of the sad friends left in the world behind,
The sudden funeral, a flowered hearse,
And the mute sorrow of their dappled hind—
At which Gulcheranoos dissolved in tears
And Beltar cried out at her pretty sorrow;
Then wept himself at thought of endless years,
Life but a memory; hope without to-morrow.
Thus for a while they wept in bitter grief,
But taking comfort in such mutual tears,
They smiled again and, finding sorrow brief,
Rose from their nest like birds when morning clears,
And laughed to see how pale and tall they were
In shrouded simars white as marble plaster,
While in their cheeks warm hope began to stir
Like wine stains creeping out through alabaster.
Still as the pupil of a Cyclop's eye
In the round cavern's entrance looked a lake,
And wondering how sweet it was to die,
Toward this now hand in hand their way they take;

[1]The word "children" is to be understood here in a special sense, i.e., young, unmarried persons still dependent upon the royal bounty in the precincts of the seraglio.

[2]*Al Aaraaf*, a sort of spiritual limbo where souls which have not been admitted to paradise but which do not deserve punishment are permitted to enjoy a kind of vague and timeless felicity.

And suddenly came out into such light
It made a fire burn palely by the cave,
By it they sat, and shuddered at their plight
When the lake wrinkled with a noiseless wave.
To right and left one meadow swept away
Through cloudy jewels of ponds and seemed to take
Itself into the very source of day;
Out of its tearful face there looked the lake
With rushes like short lashes round an eye
Which swam with all that moved and was awake,
Yet fixed a polished stare forevermore
Dreaming of herons standing by its shore.
Eastward there lonely lifted range on range
Of leaden hills which crept into the murk
Of brooding clouds that never seemed to change,
In-folded like the turban of a Turk;
And sunsetward a palely mottled stream
Crept to its grave in meadows, like a snake
That slid to nether worlds, where in a dream[3]
The djinns might come their sultry thirst to slake.
Beltar, his failing courage faintly masked,
Could scarce reply when pale Gulcher'noos said,
"Will not Mustafa come for us?" and asked
If this was paradise. He shook his head—
The Prophet's camel with the eagle wings
Would never find them here! It was too late
To turn their thoughts now upon holy things—
Dying, their souls had somehow missed the gate.
So sadly pulled the jasmine from his brows
Fragrant with happy memories of the earth.

[3]The river Hableh, like so many other streams in the interior salt wastes of Persia, dissipates itself in the sands of the *Kavir* (desert).

Meanwhile the dwarfs were weaving them a house
Of willow withes, and whispering in mirth
At heaping rushes for the children's beds
Inside the wattled cabin, by the hearth,
Deep, in one pile; one pillow for two heads.
At seeing which young Beltar now took hope,
Thinking how softly there the "dead" might rest,
He cheered Gulcheranoos, who ceased to mope,
And smiling faintly sank into the nest.
Safe from all mortal troubles and alarms,
They lost themselves in one another's arms—
The past was raveled out like useless rope.
What was there now to hinder or abash
His hands from wandering through her loosened curls?
Only a lamp within a calabash
Betrayed his cloudy fingers in their whorls,
Till soft and quiet in that nest they lay
Like two birds sleeping in a moony ray.
But limpidly that gentle lamp burned on
Trying to dim itself through Beltar's eyes,
Less like a moonbeam now, more like a dawn
It drove the shadows out of paradise.
Now like the sun it flashed on Hafiz' plan
And flooded morning into Beltar's heart—
"Lovers had been since time himself began;
They were the first who would not have to part."
"Gulcheranoos!" he whispered, pressing near,
"We shall be thus for all eternity!"
And poured with sighs in her delightful ear
The hopeful excess of his rhapsody:—
How they would stay forever in this place,

Now they were dead and shut of mortal things,
In dalliance; while immortality
Should speed upon the flash of passion's wings.
This dear, enchanted tale that boy to girl
Has always told, exalted by love's glory,
The usual whisper through the "unusual" curl,
Pristine forever with a rainbow hoary,
Here by the Lake of Dreams it would come true,
With long eternity for love's to-morrow;
Young Beltar kissed Gulcheranoos and said he knew!—
No kindly friends prognosticated sorrow.
She lay deliciously within his arms,
Murmuring like pigeons by the gate in spring:
Her head drooped back while to her heart's alarms
His arched throat trembled like a fledgling's wing.
And the still fire that glows through porcelain flesh
Brought the faint shadows underneath their eyes
That opened like dark violets, wide and fresh,
Still limpid with a spiritual surprise.
But now, as if the lamp were going blind,
The flame waned slowly in the calabash.
Only a verdant glow shone through the rind
On loosened zirjamah and slipping sash,
On ivory hands and silken kamarbands.
Were it not dark at last we might behold her,
And him from ankles to the shoulder—
But love, the poets say, is always blind.
Let us not light the lamp as Psyche did
To spill the scalding oil upon his wing;
Beltar has found his dear Gulcheranoos;
Gulcheranoos dear Beltar; let them cling

Awhile at least in what they call "forever,"
And let the future for a while be hid—
Next day it was the loveliest kind of weather,
And when they woke they heard two robins sing.

DUET

Young dawn is born
Upon a fleecy sky;
The robin sings;
The sun is drawing nigh;
The sun is hastening,
And the rose must die.
Why, lover, tell me why?
Reply:
When first she feels
His burning eye
She opens wide
Her dewy petals
That the bees bestride—
She opens wide . . .
Oh, tell me, lover,
What does this betide?
Replied:
The bee will use her
For his greedy need;
The sun has ripened her
To mix the seed.
Thus roses speed,
Indeed.
Indeed!
But tell me, lover,
Tell me of the rose—
Why must she die?
Reply:
Discover, oh, discover
Him who knows!

Thus to the lyric argument of birds
The sleepy lovers peered out of their door,
And while to thoughtless songs their souls made
words,
The world without seemed brighter than before:—
The lake was sending incense to the sun;
The hills were newly varnished by the day;
There were the dwarfs and slave who had begun
The gentle tasks of ghost-land in a play.
Here were no mortal cooks, no grumbling slovens,
To sate full appetite with Thursday's meat,[4]
But almond manchets baked in silver ovens;
Custards from panniers warmed by vinous heat;
And a delicious medlar cooled in snow;
Sunflower seeds and sugared mandragore;
Light morning wine that warms, but does not glow,
Chosen by Hafiz from a Christian's store.
Thus breakfasted these orphans who were dead—
Or so they thought—and liked this other world
Where all was theirs, and quietness instead
Of life in base confusion counterwhirled.
Meanwhile, before the cave was deftly spread
A carpet with quaint birds and flowers rife,
Bordered by beasts an unseen Adam named
Hid in the middle by the Tree of Life.
On this Gulcheranoos was softly laid
On a deep pillow; overhead a mat

---

[4] *Thursday's meat.* Accompanied only by his trusty friend Abu Bekr, the Prophet Mohammed fled from Mecca to the Oasis of Yathribe, where he arrived safely on a Friday (September 20, A. D. 622). As a consequence the Moslem holy day falls on Friday, in preparation for which cooking is done on Thursday. Hence, "Thursday's meat" is a cold "left-over."

Was swung from branches. This the dwarfs had made,
While Beltar plaited her a little hat.
And from the corded bales within the cave
Came ivory, carved, and inlaid lady-boxes
Arranged down carpet-paradise by the old slave
Amid the beasts like jeweled paradoxes:—
Here was an ivory chest in hingèd section
With pearl-set drawers for pots of unguents sweet,
And powdered asses' milk for the complexion;
Rings for the toes, and bangles for the feet.
There was a silver jar of saffron ashes,
And combs of beechwood and of mottled tortoise,
Carbuncled heron plumes for tall panaches,
Buckles from Hindustan with cunning mortise,
A zone of silver shells, an amber necklace,
Shoes, shawls, a dress complete from toes to head,
The bales of Hafiz furnish forth, as reckless,
The slave before her on the carpet spread
Her wardrobe, Ali Baba's aftermath—
Loot from Greek treasure, horned Iskander's bowl[5]
Made for Roxan, lay steaming with her bath,
Bordered with grapes that silver foxes stole;
And heathen tales of love; Apollo flew
After the nymph, young Krishna gave a feast
Quite un-Mohammedan—so holy men
Had called this bowl "The Sin of West and East."

[5] *Iskander*, or Alexander the Great, was known to the author of the Koran, and hence to his followers, only by legend and by coins upon which the former appears deified with the horns of Ammon. According to Moslem tradition these were given to Alexander by God in order that he might strike down all in his path. The bowl of Roxan is a Persian legend of about the time of the Sassanids. Traditions of the great marriage feast of the Greeks and Persians at Susa, whereby the conqueror hoped to amalgamate the East and West, lingered long in Iran.

In it the dwarfs from gold-stopped calabashes
Poured warm verbena while Gulcher'noos rose,
Leaving a nest behind of silks and sashes
She stepped into the bath. . . . Do you suppose
Young Beltar closed his eyes? Oh, no, not he!
Oh, lucky, happy Beltar, of all lovers
The happiest since Lilith was a wife,
To see your love thus in reality!
Instead of dreams as others do in life;
So to be gladdened by your very eyes,
On earth—to think it was eternity—
Thus to be maddened into paradise!
Hafiz had planned it so. One poet's dreams—
One *dream*, he said, should be reality.
And as for all the rest of us it seems
Only in poet's dreams such sights we see—
Or in our own when on a lonely bed
The poet-moon looks down and brings the bride
Or the belov'd, and the night is sped
In naked, silver moonlight, side by side.
But all this is for Beltar, all for him!
The dampened curls like clusters of the south,
The olive shoulders; arms that tapered slim
To finger tips as rosy as her mouth;
Spanned brows above her eyes than dawn stars clearer,
Hips like an antelope's, with dainty limb,
A bosom smooth as starlight on a mirror
Breasts like twin eggs upon the desert's rim—
Such as the ostrich leaves in wind-smoothed dust,
Twin domes of ivory with a sunset rust.
Well might young Beltar wish again for night!

Her waist . . . but all now that he sees
Are dimpled islands just awash, her knees,
Her hands like lilies growing in the light.

> *"Come, flower by the lake, and hear me sing.*
> *You are the lily; I the bird of spring.*
> *Spring makes me sing, and she must be obeyed,*
> *Before the wilting summer bids you fade.*
> *Winter is gone; the month of buds is past.*
> *The day for you to bloom has come at last.*
> *A day of happy voices, one of them*
> *Is singing to you, lily on your stem."*

Flushed like pomegranate blossoms in the spring
Under the April light of Beltar's eyes,
Gulcheranoos was pleased to hear him sing,
While with a towel from Shadukam[6] she dries.
Then donned a light and flowered palampore,
And sitting cross-legged like a god of Burma,
Some antimony chose from out her store
And lightly touched her parchment lids with surmeh.[7]
Dark glowed her pupils from the shadowed rim
Like violets weeping dew in twilight dim,
While Beltar felt his soul begin to swim
As if pale Ishtar looked her love at him.

---

[6] *Shadukam*, or Shadukiam, the city of bliss or perfect happiness. This was built by the genii for the peris to take refuge in from mortals. It was situated in the mountains of Kaf and was famous for the soft stuffs which the peris wove there for the pre-Adamite sultans. Towels of this peri-weaving were sometimes found by pools whence the peris had been frightened, and lucky was the finder! To rub the body with such a delightful towel was to glow with a kind of magic pleasure akin to love.

[7] A pigment prepared from impalpable antimony which when applied to the inner surface of the lids lends to the eye, especially in shade or by lamplight, a violet shadow of ravishing languor.

Trembling, he laid his head upon her lap
And turned to gaze up smiling at his doom—
It fell, a song that lulled him in a nap
With words that still bring flowers to Hafiz' tomb.[8]

"Clear Rocknabad that flows by Shiraz-town
Through violet-clouded meadows winding down . . ."

The sun leaned westward now beyond the noon
And crystal bowls, with cresses, mint, and chives,
Each with a polished cocknos bill for spoon
The slave brought, with a dressing fit for Dives.
They ate, then sought their fortune in the bowls,
But soon preferred to read it in their eyes,
And finding there the secret of their souls
Fell in each other's arms again with cries.

"Your eyes that fill my heart with warm delight
Moisten the very beams wherewith they thrill
Like evening stars on lakes that dance their light
To lovers on the hill."

And so beguiled a languid afternoon
With lover's talk, and saw a summer rain
Trailing her misty skirts down a lagoon;
The river fading in the mystic plain.
A place where halted time was more than maim,
Green in dark hills, an emerald set in lead,
Of still perpetual seasons all the same,
Lost, set apart, a vision that was dead.

---

[8]The tomb of the poet Hafiz at Shiraz is, despite his (too late) conversion to a form of Moslem puritanism, kept bright by the bouquets of lovers in gratitude for his songs in praise of love and wine—or so it is scandalously rumored. An attempt has been made here by the translator to render the *spirit* of some of these lines.

Meadows and meadows rising hill by hill
To mountains lonely as the tomb of Shem,
A lake, or dream, where even birds stood still
While horizontal lilies looked at them.
Oh, for a boat—! or music from the shore
Of the dear world where time was always new!
Memory was only grief now; more and more
They sought each other—and this Hafiz knew.
Therefore, if sometimes slowly, tear by tear,
The past brimmed over in Gulcher'noos' eyes,
Young Beltar only strove to be more dear;
The sympathetic dwarfs, with mimic cries
Of muezzins as to prayer, assembled cranes
With reedy screams and preached the Prophet's laws
Shrilly from little pulpits built of canes
'Round which the birds would gawk with solemn pause.
Their knees bent backward, as if prayer
Reversed itself amid the faithful there.
But all their oratories swarmed with fish[9]
Blue as the lake itself, and these the slave
Roasted as sweet as fasting saint could wish
Over the ruby coals before the cave;
And served at evening when the dying breeze
With shrill cicadas changed its daily tune
To moonlight cadences and harmonies
Accompanied by the bullfrogs' quaint bassoon.
Then by a dying fire beneath the stars
The slave regaled them with triumphant lies,

---

[9]The habit of the hermit crane, which stands for hours with half-bent knees contemplating the shallows, has led certain Moslem writers to suppose he is not only looking for fish, but indulging in prayer.

Such as the Arabs tell in cool bazaars,
And watched the pupils widen in their eyes.
The silent bats streamed outward from the cave
Like genii's smoke into the upper air
Until they thought it *was* the fisher's pot—
Even the story-teller stopped to stare—
Then told again of Gian Ben Gian's targe
And of the brother of the horse of brass,
Described the Simurgh by the river's marge,
And mimicked Balaam and his talking ass.
Long bows he drew, but to certain mark,
And long the tale was drawing to a close
With all eternity. . . . "But hark! Oh, hark!
Outside the bird of night exalts the rose."
The dwarfs prepare the cabin for the night
With flowers under pillows for sweet dreams·
Turn down the covers and retrim the light,
Tho' through the door the limpid moonlight streams.
Smooth are the boy and girl now in the deep
Of swan's down locked in one another's arms.
The manikins retire with prayers for sleep
And muttered gibberish of lucky charms.
Even the slave upon a camel's hide
Relaxed his sinewed limbs to long repose;
Down her white bowl the moon begins to glide;
The nightingale descanted to the rose.
The glowworm in the lily dimmed his spark;
The lake with little waves began to chime;
The stars like souls crept on from dark to dark
And in eternity recorded time.

Clear Rocknabad by Shiraz-town,
Through mountain flowers slipping down,

From breezy peaks you take your way
And then meander for a day
Where lovers walk in Mosellay.
The oak and palm attend your state,
The willow and the bending date;
Down many a fresh, sequestered slope
Trips cautiously the antelope—
Before you bathe the city's gate—
He, bending to your cooling brim,
Beholds the lily look at him.
Then, muddied by the fisher's weir
And lost amid the Lake of Dreams,
You wander where the heron gleams,
But nevermore emerge the same,
Because the men who haunt the fen
Have called you by another name—
And Beirsebad drinks "Bandemir."
Clear Rocknabad, flow lower down
And tell the zealots in the town,
Whose beards are not so very nice,
Who banquet on a bowl of rice—
Flow down to them and say:
"No saint of Beirsebad has had
A vision clear as Rocknabad;
There are no vales in Paradise
As cool as Mosellay."[10]

---

[10]This song of the River Rocknabad, which flows by Shiraz and is famous for the delicious retreats it affords to lovers along its banks, is said to have been written by Hafiz upon hearing of the success of his experiment and sent to his master with a demand for the twelve camel loads of spices. It is probably a specimen of the romantic poetry of which Shah Mansur complained, and it must certainly antedate the conversion of the poet to the tenets of a more austere sect.

SARAH SIMON

Character Atlantean

They, content with the glow of carefully tempered twilight
Measured pulses of joy, and colorless growth of the senses,
Stand aghast at my dream of the sun, and the sound, and
the splendor.

—Bayard Taylor

SARAH SIMON

I

Old Sarah lived upon a patch of ground
Set on an island-peak that tops the sea
Some hundred feet or so, and then slopes down
Amid the hills of aquid atmosphere
Where fins are wings, and ever-hungry lives
Seem cruel utilities beyond our ken.
There other-beauty sickens in our eyes,
And sympathy dies at the water's edge
Where our experience halts—upon a star
That might have been all water—almost is.
Scarce can we sympathize from zone to zone.
Or pass from town to country with a heart
And brain at one, much less appreciate
Creatures of other ethers than our own.
Yet simple Sarah Simon found a way.
Her ninety years have fitted like a key
Into the lock of life, and the huge door
She is about to open, she can face
Like some full grown and amply pinioned bird
That waits upon a leafless nesting bough
Ready to make the long instinctive flight,
It asks not why, yet knows that it must go.
So Sarah waits upon her patch of ground.
"That is important, for a while," she says.

"Where would I go in this my present shape?
I still must stay a bit." And so she bides
Her time amid the chickens and her goats,
Some cackling geese, a cat,—the dog has died.

Nine several dogs have died since Sarah came,
To keep her tidy cottage near the beach,
The strong, young wife of Simon, fisherman,
An able coper with the ways of sea,
Yet somewhere on its plains his craft went down
Where glides the waterspout; where Summer stands
Shifting her glowing raiment cloud by cloud,
Till August. Then the naked season strides
Burning beneath her rainbows past the isles
To play with Hurricanoe's progeny.
Out of her careless arms a squall leaped down,
Whistling from cloudy cheeks, and when he passed,
The faithful sea dog Simon followed him,
And Sarah was a widow, suddenly.
All that she had was courage and some land,
Clear brain, and two strong hands not cunning yet,
And a half-finished house that Simon left—
And that was all there was if you except
A few thin clothes for body and for bed.
And a young dog, the second of his tribe.
A long-lived race they were that bore with fleas
And hard humanity almost ten years.
Sarah told time by dogs, arithmetic
That writes her down about a century old.

Sarah first found herself when Simon left.
What went before she scarcely seems to know:

A child that played in shadows and in gleams,
A mother with dark legends of the strand
Down which the cormorant slaver used to blow,
Dolls that were made from grinning cocoanuts
And rocked to sleep before the cloudy glow
Of deep-set chimneys under cedar beams
With eery "hushaby" and "byalow,"
Tunes that are wraiths now even in her brain—
Vanished from lips a hundred years ago—
As vanished in the chain of day on day
Her girlhood on long beaches pink with shells,
Faces and voices—everything to slow
Memories like music of abandoned bells
When winds without shake towers where they sway,
Waking old voices of past joys and woe
That leave the bells, although they tremble yet . . .

And so—

It seemed to Sarah she was permanent,
Rooted too deep to die, and like a tree
To generations of the withering grass
Or birds within its branches. And she found
From this pervasive feeling of her soul
The way to keep on living till it seemed
As if she were the pattern of a plan
And characterized to fit a scheme of things
Longer and larger than the world about
Of men, and beasts, and tender seasonal plants
That died, and left her living by the sea.
For thus I found her.

Sarah Simon lived
Down a white lane with tender tamarisk lined.
A sudden turn, and you come out upon
An oval meadow sloping toward the bay,
With morning-glory-blue that seemed to blend
With the horizon's hue, which just above
Her low-eaved, milk-white house with latticed blinds
Stenciled a god-ruled line along the sky.
Here the goats fed all day with tinkling bells,
Bleating to bounding kids. The red birds flashed,
And sang their thicket notes. Salt breezes blew.
Or on soft "winter" days the lazy smoke
Of fragrant cedar wood from Sarah's fire
Drifted its hazy plume into the sky,
While ripples chimed, and the long tides drew back
Showing the teeth of rocks. A place to dream,
It was. A stony path worn hollow by
The ceaseless passing of old Sarah's feet
Led to the green, clear cove wherein a boat
Cast shadows on the sponges, and white sand
Beat back the light blue-tinged and tangent-red
To blue and scarlet flowers by the shore.

Sequestered and hill-sheltered from the sea,
A dimple where the treacherous coastline smiled,
Here by her secret harbor Sarah made
A garden all about her whitewashed house.
Geraniums smoldered mid banana leaves
Even by moonlight, and the larkspur rang
In Gothic steeples carillons of bells.
A thousand lilies lolled their yellow tongues,
The spider-flower over whips of green

Twinkled its web-like fronds in lacy-haze
Against the tall casava's classic leaves.
And round the garden mottled match-me-can
Its hedge of terra cotta closed about,
And lifted proudly walls against the wind.
Through it an archway passed, and here in spring
A tent of Bougainvillæa dripped and shed
Clusters of grape-dark blossoms, purple gloom
That ran like wine in sunlight. And the green
Of fennel, tall and feathery, in a wave
Melting with aërial yellows, surged about
The meadow's cedared shores and tossed like spray,
Splashing the walls of tamarisk down the lane.

Somewhat mysterious here old Sarah moved
Around her bowered house, now, much eschewed
By all the cottagers who lived about,
Whose simple generations lived and died
While tales of Sarah took a tinge of fear:
How she was miserly and buried gold
By moon-dark, and charmed warts, and how
Unbidden cows that cropped her meadow died,
Or birds lit on her fingers when she called.
Certain it is she had a bed of herbs
And brewed old nostrums that have always thrived
In spite of Æsculapius and his ways,
Half magic things with lunar sympathies,
Soothing, or pungent, or salubrious,
Especially when the sun swings north in spring,
Heating the blood of poor humanity.
Lemons, and onions, tansy, and henbane,
With cedar berries, and Sargasso weed

Swept by the Gulf Stream from a mystic sea,
Peppers, and pawpaws, and five several kinds
Of lilies that breathe love through summer days
Hung from her rafters with wild thyme, and mint
That springs in wagon ruts along old roads
Where funerals pass with sleepy influence.

Herbs she was skillful with, and many a scared
But hopeful, barefoot, dusky lover sat
And watched her brew them in her spider pots,
Then crossed her shining palms with Yankee dimes,
Or shillings of Victoria as a girl.
Dames they must be and young and comely, too.
No fat George thirds with slaughtering George would
do;
No bearded kings, or eagles! They buy hate,
Whether in gold or silver, Sarah knew:
So they would come by night thus, boy or girl,
And sometimes even trembling youngsters came,
Rolling white eyes still tinged with puppy-blue,
Stretching afflicted palms for Sarah's aid
To charm the warts away that gold-eyed toads
Big as a plowman's boot, with bellows throats,
Had vengefully left upon their meddling hands.
For every wart she knotted twisted threads
And hung them in a nutshell round brown necks,
And rubbed sore palms with lemon essence strong
From little bottles buried in the sand
That colors vials like the summer sea,
And in four moons these warts would pine away!
Scarce was a wound of heart, or hide, or limb
That Sarah did not have a lotion for,

Some simple vegetable-magic old as time,
Based on dim analogues from nature's ways
Of likes or differences; and old half-truths
Older than gods or science, that began
Before the star bore cities and will last
Till the earth grows tired of us and we return
From reason back to childhood; asking still
Some comfort from stepmother nature's ways
For hurts and bruises; comfort more than cure.

Sarah dispensed this, as old women can,
To all her tribe about, the pagan heart
Of half her island lost amid the seas,
Its sybil, mightier than the white man's lore,
While offerings they left upon a stone
Proclaimed the gratitude of simple minds.
Duck eggs she found at morning wrapped in grass,
Fruit in fresh leaves; often a squawking hen
Tethered at midnight fluttered till the dawn
And Sarah came to end its frantic plight.
Pigeons, and even kids with budding horns,
Crying the ancient formula of "Ma,"
Thus found themselves by magic in her flock
And servants of the Priestess of the Isle.

This through half-jealous eyes the curate saw,
And with broad Oxford "a's" denounced to me
In walks about his tropic parish bounds.
And told me much of Sarah: how she came
Sometimes, not often, to the little church,
But never took the cup, but sat alone,
While overhead the bells that Anna gave

Summoned the black man to an English heaven,
And angels golden-haired and Saxon-eyed
Looked at dark faces from the glass and smiled.
The "accidie" and well bred sermon rolled
From false analogy to platitude—
"Swahd of th' Lawd and Gideon, be-lov-ed."
The liquid hands lolled in the flowing sleeves,
That might grow longer and more flowing still,
If their suave owner lived to play the game,
And those proud ships he saw down in the bay,
Dauntless, *Wisteria*, and *Heliotrope*,
But kept their powder dry . . . "God save the King
And all the royal family, Lawd, ahmen,"
While Sarah watched him with her ancient eyes.

Often at Sunday dinners came those eyes
Of Sarah, dark and brown, inscrutable,
Over the plate a rich slave owner gave
To serve Christ's servant at the parsonage,
Troubling the future bishop and his plan
So sure, so based on *the* humanities
That dons teach by the Isis and the Cam.
And he would rise and leave his wife alone
To twitter to the children, half afraid—
While he read letters Pliny junior wrote
To Trajan, in the library, or slept
With Doctor Pusey's *Sermons* on his knee—
Or pondered over Sarah and her kind,
Dark spots upon the map that was so red,
So royally red, till Mr. Gladstone came!
"Someone had blundered. . . ." So he told me how
Sarah was slightly crazy and would talk

Aloud and to herself. How old she was,
And how she gave her harlot's dower away
To half-caste children years and years ago,
Whose pale descendants were church pillars now
And hated their grandmother, but the land
Sarah had kept and lived on, and lived on . . .
"My God!" they said. "Why doesn't Grandma die?"
Then died themselves while Sarah kept the land.

Thus from the curate, and from sons of sons,
And granddaughters of Sarah I had heard
Conflicting rumors; and her story grew
Till one day meeting her within her lane
I overheard her stream of muttered talk
That fell like prophecy from ancient lips—
At first I thought as foolish—but I found
Hers was no senile jargon, visioned-sound,
But large communion with her inner self
In a wise talk with all of nature round.
Words for the flowers, and low tones for trees,
And many little animal sounds she knew.
To her the kids would gallop. It was true
Birds lit upon her fingers. Down the lane
Behind her through the damasked tamarisk
The scarlet ghosts of silvan cardinals,
Bright red birds, heard her twitter, came for crumbs,
And sparrows fought for them about her feet.
Scarce would the pigeons flutter from her hand.
Such animal confidence begot strange fear
In some who spied upon her, but I came
Charmed like the birds by something natural,
And sat beside her while she milked her goats.

Her talk ran on in tones impersonal,
Based on primeval and essential thoughts,
In which, herself forgotten, she enlarged
And focused broadly gathered rays of light
With subtle clarity on minor things
That long had lain in shadow to my eyes.
Honoring her listener with the same address
She used for kids and oceans, birds or trees,
She waited for her answers till they came.
These words of hers all stood for something real,
A thing, a thought, an act original.
Direct communion with the summer light
In all the cups that held it had been hers
For more than ninety years, day after day.
Her mouth was savory of it. And this dew
Of freshest thought fell on my bookman's ears
Like heavenly news to angels far from home.
No nervous generation trimmed her crown
Of life-fulfilled with paper flowers of youth;
Full-ripened seed pods nodded on her brows,
Ready to burst with rich exuberance,
Yet strong and beautiful upon the vine.
No oft repeated printings caged her in
With echoes of far-off experience;
No set experiments enfoiled her mind.
She dealt alone with the majestic spheres
Of facts empirical: what weathers came
And when but never why, what fish arrived
By season, how the hens laid in the spring
But took a rest in summer, and what slips
Did best in sunlight, others by the wall,
What seeds to sow in winter, how to make

A garden give more beauty, shade, and food,
And animals to thrive—a total scheme
Of living by the kindliness of earth
Through observation bent on primary things.
Thus looked her mind upon terrestial ways
Like a small sun—more than a pleasant moon
With dead reflected light—and drawing up
The needful waters let them down again
Upon the proper place to make things grow,
From early morning till the twilight fell.
Her rest was but light's absence in the night.

And this I noticed too of Sarah's talk,
Her body, face, and hands, though they were old,
Still they were beautiful, and fresh, and cool,
And living as the air at morning is,
Blowing through cedars from the open sea.
Along the curves of beaches many a day
I went to see her for my spirit's good,
Taking some seeds or younglings of my plants,
And asking what to plant, and when and where.
Thus with small problems easily solved by her,
Who had a century's answer to them all,
I finally came to sit within her house,
While she baked white casava by the fire,
And talked of things that used to be, and men,
And women, and the daily round of life
Upon that island, a sequestered world
One brain could grasp in all, perhaps to find
Analogies for worlds of larger scope
Likewise dependent on the lore of plants
And seasons, but disguised by man-made things.

Finally, but bit by bit, her story came,
Sometimes pieced out by others that I knew,
But mostly talk from Sarah by the fire,
While the rain washed upon December nights
Off of the stones laid on the cedar beams,
Before mild, tropic winter settled down—
Giving a pause to flowers—and the sea
Beat with monotonous tones upon the beach,
Flooded the island's coral, and fell back,
Like old emotions ebbing from a brain.

II

When Simon died his young wife watched for him,
Scanning the shifting shadows of the sea
Three days upon the cliff, then called the dog
And went back to the house and sat alone.
She let her hands fall limply by her chair
As if all she had grasped ran out of them,
Till hunger barked at grief and roused her will.
Some mush she cooked, of which there was scant store,
And while the fire died, by the waning coals
She dreamed about the future; then lay down
To her first widowed sleep, and faced the day.
After hot tears, with courage and her hands.

The roof was not yet on. An ancient sail
Flapped dismally between her and the sky.
So roof, and food, and raiment were first thought.
Even the tools had gone with Simon's boat.
An axe she borrowed from a neighbor near,
And in the somber thicket by the lane

Cut ten strong cedar trees, then shaped them square
And dragged them homeward by an anchor chain.
Then to a former playmate, farmer now,
With snug house of his own, she went and told
Her great necessity with Simon gone.
And he, good man, with others came by night,
After the work upon his fields was done,
And raised her web of beams against the stars,
Thatching it in with broad palmetto leaves
Against the summer sun till winter came.
Meanwhile with needles of sharp fishesbone,
And rusty nail for awl, poor Sarah made
Herself new dress and hammock from the sail;
A hat from scented grasses; and she plied
The garden with bare hands, and shells, and sticks,
Planting her corn, casava, and what not
From seed by handfuls that she begged about,
Saving her bag of meal for desperate use,
And levying toll upon the generous sea
For fish, and mussels, crabs, and even birds
That left their young in crannies of the rocks.

Never a moment idle—late at night
Down in the quarry where the long saws stood
She and the dog were seen by stars and moon,
While through the sandstone hissing metal rasps
Bit, through the cast-off blocks the masons left,
A hundred, then a thousand little tiles,
Twenty, a night. And twenty by the day
She chipped and polished on the rusty prow
Of an old wreck that lay upon the beach,
Whose rusty iron remainders stained the sand.

Meanwhile the garden like the tile heap grew;
A straying hen came clucking to the door;
And to the neighbors for five miles around
Sarah in canvas gown went begging eggs.
Ten was the total. And nine chicks she got
After three weeks, and kept them in her room
With the proud mother and the rat-wise dog.
She foraged cobs of corn for them at night
To cherish them. From these her whole flock grew.
Now for some nails! No easy thing to get,
For not a single penny Sarah had.
They must be copper, too, to hold her roof.
So up and down the reefs for miles she ranged,
And dragged old timbers by a chain at night,
Striving with long, dank hair against the tide
When it was low and she could wade the bars,
Till in the cove the garnered ship-bones grew
And whitened in the summer sun and dried.
Now fire by fire for every mess she cooked
Of fish or greens, out of the fuel she drew
The precious copper nails shipbuilders use;
Hammered them straight; and hid them safe away,
Counted like sovereigns, and when autumn came
She had one thousand and eight more to spare.
Next through the sandstone tiles, with iron bolts
Sharpened and tempered by the fire and sea,
She slowly, painfully bored a careful hole;
Fitted a nail, and drove it in the beams.
So tile by tile, and, slowly, row by row,
With every row of single nail-pierced stones,
She closed the wind and weather from her head.
This was first triumph. Now she had a home!

What admiration struck the countryside
For poor John Simon's widow by the sea!
A pretty girl at that! The masons came
One afternoon and chinked her rooftree in;
Whitewashed the house; and one a window brought,
Set it within the wall, and made a box
Out of an old stone trough. And Sarah put
A bright geranium there, and clapped her hands,
And paused for joy to see her pretty house.
Thus two years passed while Sarah lived alone.
What tools she got, and how the spinning wheel—
Cast off by white folks when the cloth bales came—
Within her cottage came to life and whirled
Her cotton and her flax to thread she wove
Upon a loom made with a knife and hands,
There is no time to tell. Let but the roof
Suffice for here a symbol of her days,
And look about you in her little house
Some two years after Simon has been gone.
There is a copper kettle on the hob,
The bottom mended in some white-hot sand,
The chiefest pride and glory of the room,
Seven clay dishes, and ten wooden spoons
Whittled from fragrant cedar, and a chair
Made from a tide-brought barrel, a bed, and cloth
Spun by her hands and folded in a chest
That Simon kept his gear in. Now, instead
Of hooks and lines and sinkers, there are quilts
Made of a hundred fancy odds and ends,
And snips from counters at the village store;
Linen, and thrice-bleached cotton white as lime,
Laid in verbena and sweet cedar chips.

And all about the walls a hundred things
Her tireless fingers made were hung on pegs:
A wooden lantern with oiled parchment sides,
Combs carefully rasped from cedar, and a cage
Woven of oleanders for white doves,
And baskets of lush grasses. On the floor
A carpet made of sacking graced the hearth,
With knotted fringes lapping round its sides.
Upon a shelf that glowed with twisted shells
Were gourds of curious shapes that she had bound
While yet upon the tree with fishers' twine
To make her cups and bottles, and goose-necked
Pitchers, and crane-like vessels shaped like those
The peasant's spade turns up in Italy.
And many a jug the sea washed up she wove
With cane withes and palmetto splits about
In deftest pattern, checkerboard or plait.
Scarcely a thing she lacked that other folk
With silver in their purses went to buy.
Out of her brain they came with lovely shapes
And quaint invention, carved with leaf and vine
And thistle-bud, pineapple, or pine cone,
Or veined like shells; while defter grew her hands,
And tides, and garden, wood, and copse, and field,
Meadow, and beaches brought her all she wrought.
So brisk a little house, so shining clear
With lime-washed stone, and polished wood, sweet grass,
And homespun stuffs, I think there never was,
With floor like marble, powdered clay and lime,
The window glittered in the morning light.
The dog and all his family kept the door.

Puss watched the hearth white-sanded where the
brooms
Of rushes bound with grasses on a stick
Hung on their cypress pegs beside the fire.

Thus furnished forth a housewife, ran her fame
Through fields and hamlets, and for many a mile
On Sunday afternoons the young bucks came
To talk with Sarah, and admire her house.
Here each could see himself anon ensconced
With flock, and garden, roof, and comely wife
For a few hours' fishing on the side—
When luck was good, tide served, or winds were fair—
With hours left to bask and smoke the sun
Out of the evening sky. Tobacco dried
With brown and lanky leaves along the beams,
All that a man need do was twist a "hank"
A little—even with a broken knife—
Fill up a pipe, and thought, chief enemy
To men in fertile islands, was no more.
Thought slain—what else? On Sunday afternoon
Sweet clouds of incense drifted round her door
And tried to tangle Sarah in the dreams
That wreath-curled, lolling lovers thus evoked
From corncob pipes. But when the evening came
Her door was closed, and no broad hands that tapped,
Or voices in the moonlight calling low,
Or even faces pressed against the pane
Until her light went out, brought down the bar.

Sarah was obdurate, and time went on
And left her jesting with her dog and cat

About the simple prowlers of the night.
Fear of her conjuring took the place of bars,
While she possessed herself in careful peace,
Stronger than girlhood, proud she had known man,
But longing now instead to be fulfilled
By something more than talking animals;
Feeling there was a glory in her womb
That could not mate with night again, and yet—
Feeling and hoping only without words—
Knowing, as if unconscious destiny
Realized, and waited, and was glad of it.
So no one knew that midnight sometimes saw
This woman, tired of her long lonely bed,
Shaping smooth cedar boards before the fire,
Fitting and whittling, carving hour by hour
A cradle with a hood, and rockers curved
Out of a stranded whale's rib, while the light
Beat on the wood, the ivory, and her hands
As if she worked at something in a dream.
And so she saw herself, and dreaming slept
Till the white morning poured in through the door,
While one continuous song of roosters rose
Like bell notes, and delirious, eery horns
Greeting the cloudless face of sailing Sol.

III

Summer, and summer—and three summers passed.
The cradle and its ghost were hid away.
A calm and rainless, scorching fall came on.
Even the cactus withered. Then one night
The waves down in the cove began to lisp,
Then whisper, and then hiss, then higher climb.

Breakers along the cliff broke into spray,
And hurried in with backs in oily ranks
That glittered underneath a copper sun,
As if the stagnant and reluctant sea
Somewhere, far off, was troubled. And a wind
Sucked through the parching grasses, and then rose,
Then stopped a breathless hour, then began
But dropped again. Then for a day blew on,
Harder and stronger, till the branches moaned,
And overhead long, strangling scarfs of mist
Raced till they drew a net across the sky.
Then came a hollow silence while the birds
Circled for cover with despairing cries,
While snake-like breezes hurried through the grass.
A grayness grew like fear upon the face
Of one who dies when morning lamps burn dim.
Up from the world's edge, just beyond the rim
Of stifled waters flashing mirrors back
To the dim, mist-wreathed sun, an agony
Of huge gray serpents writhed. The bar
Boomed and grew frantic till the island quaked
From quivering sea to sea. A midnight cloud
Rushed up and over and came billowing down
With frontlet of red lightnings like the veins
Upon the forehead of a driving Baal,
Pulling dark hemispheres across the bright.
Dun smoke filled all the land. The sun went out.
And with a metal scream from scorching throats
Of white-maned horses in a molten sea,
The storm shot down and writhed his whips about,
Lashing the leaves off with white wires of spray,
Roaring and inundating all the land.

Safe in her steadfast house with rope-tied blinds
Sarah had gathered all her little host
Of bleating, clucking, barking, mewing things.
While the house shook, ducks quacked upon the floor;
Kids gamboled; and dogs cowered by the walls.
The rain in one unceasing torrent rang,
And dashed straight lines against the staggering roof.
The wind bounced down and soughed itself away,
And then leapt down again upon its kill.
The anvil blows from hammers of the sea
Shook the hard ground, while in the twilit room
Lamps fluttered and went out, the flame plucked
off—
Blue in the ghastly fingers of the draught—
Snuffed out; and then let back; then snuffed again.
It seemed as if the chimney were a pump
That drew the air clean out of Sarah's lungs,
Leaving her head veins throbbing—then let go.
Blue lightning flickered through the slatted blinds.
The thunder crashed gargantuan crockery,
And rolled enormous drumfire over things.
Horizon to horizon roared the sky,
One ululating bellows. Stronger grew
The heaving pressure, and the streaming sand
Scoured the window panes. Rocks bounded by
And smote the dinted walls. The threshold drank,
While plank by plank the spreading leakage grew.
But one more effort and the world would go!

Sarah looked out and saw the little hill,
Which sloped into the headland, capped with foam,
Slanting the wind and spray across her house

That nestled by the cove-side at its foot,
Else had it never stood thus to the storm.
Plowing the waves back like a vessel's prow,
That sharpened headland stood and seemed to move
Into the elements with V-shaped wake.
From every fang of rocks upon its crest
The spume streamed back in long and wisping lines
Like seaweed from the tushes of a whale.
Down in the cove the waters had withdrawn
And left the sea-bed dry, a bowl-like place,
Where sea gulls sheltered, dotted, or in lines,
Facing the wind, their beaks peaked in the blast
That strove to tear them from their coral base.
In loops of little valleys that gave down
In usual weather on a blue, flat sea
The waves like painted plaques moved up and down
Against the leaden back-drop of the sky,
Foaming and yeasting, and then swirled around
As if the earth changed axis, while the trees
Spun on their gaping bases and screamed out,
As with one last and god-demented blast
That shook the cowering island like a rag
And seemed to thrash it in the soapy sea,
The wind passed. . . .
Only the rain dripped from the sodden eaves.
A sickly sun peered out. It seemed at first
As if perpetual silence claimed the land.
After a while some birds began to cheep,
And then a sigh went up from living things.
And gradually a distant yelling sound
As of strange animals in fearful pain
Forced on the mind the presence of the sea

Torturing the rocks, though that seemed quiet, too,
To what had been before. The dog got up,
And whimpering followed Sarah to the door
She slowly opened, carefully peering out
To listen to the pother of the sea
Stammering like drunken giants in a brawl.
Boom! What was that? A "turtle in the net,"
Some ship upon the reefs! Where was it, then?
Boom! How she flew now to the headland's crest,
Tripping on sprawling branches!—*Doom* . . .
And a flash there in the scudding murk
Against the cloud still trailing out to sea.
Yes, she could see it now a half mile out,
A long black object, figures clinging there,
Where the spray dashed a full ten fathoms high
Smothering the sagging deck, and halfway in
A floating mast poked up—a bundle there.

Down to the cove raced Sarah, where the boat
Lay bottom up, half smothered in the foam
The wind had blown from yeasty miles of sea.
How could she right it, neighbors miles away?
A wave washed in and moved it; let it down.
And with a summoned strength that almost tore
Her arms out of her sockets, and with oars
Drawn from their rocky hiding place she heaved
Against the boat upon the yielding sand,
Inching it slowly, wave by wave by wave
Into the water till it floated free,
Still bottom up. But like the storm itself
She leaped upon it, pressing down the keel
Until it righted; and from left to right

Rocked out the water; bailed it with her skirt;
Poled with her oars to keep her from the land,
And in the saddle of a racing sea
Shot from the cove, her back against the waves.
Up, up she went, then boiling down. It seemed
In those vast hollows she was surely lost.
The gulls screamed under curling caverns,
And no one saw her but the howling dog
Running along the cliff's edge, mad with fear.
Sometimes she glimpsed, poised on a ragged crest
Amid the wallowing mountains of the sea,
The white mast wavering, nodding drunkenly,
Yet drifting in, she thought—so strove again,
Staggering through hissing craters. Then once more
The mast shot up with something flapping there,
And yet again, and on she pulled, and on.
How Sarah crossed that half a mile of sea;
How she stood up and cut that bundle down
While mast and boat both bobbed like bottle corks,
Only the dog upon the cliff might know.
She found a sheath knife round the sailor's neck,
Else he had drifted bound and to his death.
So firmly was he lashed, the blue chafed weals
Were on his body, raw for many a day.
But he came loose and fell into the boat,
Slumping between the thwarts like bundled clothes—
A bearded man she saw, and saw no more.
For now the lull passed, and a tearing sound,
As if the air rent like a frozen sail,
Flattened the sea. This saved her, for the wind
Came roaring shoreward, ripping off in spray
The tops of combers, and her boat drove down

Into the water, and then shot away
As if the earth turned under it, and washed
In one vast smothering surge upon the shore,
Rolled over, and left Sarah clinging there
To the limp body she had snatched from sea.
Determined as a panther with its prey,
She dragged him limply by a ledge of rocks,
Taking the ruts for shelter, inch by inch
And foot by foot and upward toward her lair.
This was the final, bitterest test of all
Between her spirit and the elements.
Only the strong heart and the vivid mind
That longed for life, more life, and ever life,
And chose the way to find it through the storm,
Brought her at last to shelter, while the trees
Rose from their roots and slanting walked away.
Roaring like harps of furies. Yet she came,
Battered by lashing branches and débris,
Into the shelter of the hill and house;
Stood upward; forced the door back with last strength;
Dragged her limp man beyond it, and fell down—
With nothing left but life—thought blown away.
Outside the tireless fury bugled on.

IV

Thus Sarah snatched her mate out of the sea.
James Trevlock, he, a tawny Cornishman,
Tall, with the blood of sailors in his veins
From Tyre and Gades, and the Cornish ports
Where Penkevil looks down at Harry's Reach.
Truro, and Penryn River, and St. Mawes,

Trefusis, and Pendennis knew them well,
And saw their keels go out to all the world
From coracle to frigate after gain.
Keen at a bargain, and in trading wiles
Tinct with a trace of avid Semite blood
Sharpened with Celtic, set with giant thews
Caught from an ageless struggle with the sea,
They gathered *things* by shiploads, brought them
home,
Sold them to homely Saxons, and got more.
So Trevlock throve until he struck a reef—
After three days of planetary moil.
All that he had went down except one shirt
The waves hung on the coral rocks to dry,
As if in mockery, with gnashed débris
Marked *Splendid* on its splinters here and there.
He sat for weeks and looked across the sea,
And then came in at nights and slept as if
His mind were washed away. Till breeze and sun,
And many a long hot day upon the beach,
And quiet evenings underneath the beams
With Sarah crooning low beside the fire,
And her soft words, and pleasant, quiet ways
Brought vigor to his limbs and to his mind—
The anodyne it needed for the past
Vanished forever, wife and child, and friends,
And little things his hands kept searching for
Out of sheer habit. All of them were gone.
Life was a blank a while—then time went on.
And he accepted what his fortune brought:
Sarah, the cottage, and the peaceful days
And nights of deathlike sleep. Then lived again.

Began, it seemed, as if he had been born
At thirty-five, with Sarah by his side—
One year of utter peace where no one came—
Then the first baby cried and broke the spell,
And he returned into the world of men.

James Trevlock walked into that island's mart
Much like a man who wakens from a dream.
To many questions he replied one word,
"Shipwrecked," and that was all, except his eyes
That opened like a space of cloudless sea
Before the sun goes down, then closed again.
That was his answer to the curious.
Soon he was rigging ships and doing well;
Soon he was known to merchants of the place.
And his advice on cargoes added well
In columns on the ledgers of that town
Which throve by shipping, for its cedar ships
Went out to all the world in peace or war,
Bringing fat bales or prizes to the port,
A colony quite lenient in its ways,
Where leniency was sometimes buccaneer.
Not curious, it let its secrets slide
Into the depth of smiling ocean miles
That kept them safe forever. But "Come home,"
That was the watchword, and no questions asked.
By night star-glimmering beaches saw the bales
Roll safely to deep caverns—rum and silk,
And teas, and gold, and spices—that was all.
Let any man but know the ways of sea,
Of stars, and tides, and sextant, drift and sails,
And he was rich. And so James Trevlock throve.

Another year went by, and he had gone
Sailing to Demerara in a brig,
And leaving Sarah watching by the sea.

Then he was back again, a skipper now
By accident, and wiles, and careful tongue,
Now much sought after for his knowing ways.
He brought a store of chests and curious things,
Dresses for Sarah, silks, and combs, and rings,
A bag of sovereigns—buried by the hearth—
And foreign furniture, stools, beds, and chairs,
An English carpet, all a captain's share
Of a long, rich, and profitable voyage
Down to the Indies in a dangerous time.
This trove by night in country carts he hauled
To Sarah's house, and stayed, for it was home.
His child was in the cradle. All he had,
Or knew, or cared for any more was there.
The sea he told himself had cast him there
Into her very arms, and a fierce pride
Sustained him in a careless gratitude
That made her the custodian of things
She scarcely knew the use of, and cared less.
To him it seemed that Sarah's quiet way,
Her welcome, and her love, and spotless house
Obliterated barriers of race,
Brought him oblivion for the toils of sea,
And where he lost his past he might renew
His life again. And so the seasons ran.

Three times he sailed thus; came; and went again,
A year or so between, and for each time,

To mark his advents, as it were, with life,
Another child was born and waited him,
Kicking within the cradle, strong and marked
With his own features, but in copper-brown
With the lithe limbs of Sarah, and her eyes—
A boy that bore his name, a pair of girls;
While every time he came he still brought home
More of his voyage's getting that was stored
In Sarah's cottage, warm now with the glow
Of beaten-copper vessels and the shine
Of paler silver of a Spanish mold,
And red mahogany, and brilliant stuffs,
Scarlets that please the sun-filled tropic eyes
Of Sarah's race, and blues, and rippling browns.
A little "shrine" he called it, for the word
Fell from his lips; it was a "shriney" time
When men still played the gallant to their loves,
Whoever they might be, white, dark, or brown.
And Trevlock was half pirate anyway,
At least in soul, and cared for never a word
Of island whispers silent to his face.
Each child he buried coins for in a bag,
And poured his all for Sarah in her lap
With oaths of gratitude—then sailed away,
Hailing from no place, bound for Ecalpno.

So for the fourth time Sarah watched his sail,
A bigger vessel now, pass out to sea;
Twinkle upon the blue horizon's line;
Mix with the gulls, and vanish. And a year
Went by, and yet he did not come.
And then another, while the children grew;

While she with everything her heart desired
Except his company and passions' purge,
Sat on the promontory by the cove
And sewed or knitted, or else moved about
Minding her simples or the flocks and droves
Now much increased, a profitable care.
Then summer came again, and now she knew
Trevlock would never come to her again.
No, he had gone like Simon; Trevlock, too,
Had gone away from her into the sea.
And she was left upon her plot of ground,
With fruits of her own labor, Trevlock's gifts,
With three small children, and a world to do.

No burst of agony fell from her lips—
Tears from her eyes. A kind of cosmic calm
That she had caught from sea and tree and hill,
And the long doubt that turned to certainty,
From silence after storms, and living things
That walked, or fluttered; bloomed about her house—
Taught her no frenzied pattern for her grief,
But straight acceptance. So her steady eyes
Turned on her children with no hurt despair,
But hope, and happiness, and trust fulfilled,
Like a proud tree that sees its limbs weighed down
By fruit it did not journey far to get
But waited rooted for the voyaging bee
To first despoil its flowers; go away,
And leave his careless trampling marked by fruit—
So were these gifts that life had brought to her.
Nor did she hear the talk of neighbors near.
Half envious it was; they looked on her,

Angry at their own starved and troubled lives.
No trees were they that waited for the bee.
They clutched at things like low, earth-creeping vines
Strangling themselves by their too avid clasp.
They wondered at her beauty and her strength,
Her lovely children, and her calm, firm house
Full of love's gifts they called "the wage of sin,"
Yet coveted—while all her blossoms blew,
Her son and daughters grew, and Sarah lived.

V

Oh, if you could have seen her! You would know
How Sarah triumphed in those full, firm years
Of latter youth and glorious womanhood—
How beautiful she was, and how she walked
With burdens on her head, firm from the waist,
Like maidens that look out from Athens' porch,
Princess of caryatids—how her brood,
Nimble and laughing, romped along the lane
Before her and behind her with wide eyes,
And lips apart to taste the honeyed breeze
Of its most delicate tang of happiness—
How smooth they were from water and the sun,
Like olive wood set in a southern door
With color that might melt a sculptor's eye—
Let it not fidget yours when bent on fawns.
For such they were, with forest attitudes.
But dressed in glowing stuffs she loved to sew,
From bolts stored in her chests from strange countries,
So heathen-striped they made the white folk stare.

Lucky for Sarah that these things in chests
Were kept in chests and not inside her heart
To gloat upon until they faded there.
Lucky for her, thrice lucky that she found
Her heart was filled with life about her house,
Her flowers, voices of the sea and wind,
And longed for no small gossip. Set apart
Like some strong tree within a cloistered place,
A part of it, yet heedless of all men
That through reverberant arches come and go,
She let their passing voices die away,
While she grew stronger, planted, and alone,
Sending her roots down deep into the ground,
And flowering when her glorious season came.

For she was one with nature in her place,
Part of the winds that blew across warm seas,
Of rainbow mists, blue water, and white air,
Sunshine like angels' shadows on the world,
Vine leaves, and bodies of soft living things,
And of the sandy and the colored earth,
Red clay that gestates lilies, and dark loam.
The very essence of it in a mold
Of mild perfection, with a crystal mind
Clear as the air it looked through from her eyes.
All that Atlantean islands might have bred
If curse of cross and candle, sword and horse
And greedy admirals, and thirsty crews,
And half the needy lees of Christendom
With chains, and creeds, and theories, and machines
Had never saved such worlds for gods and kings
To work their avid, sovereign wills upon.

It seemed as if too late fond nature now
Had fashioned Sarah to rebuke these things.

Yet hers was not a tale of paradise
Under the rustling palms, of childlike mind
Too innocent for suffering, lacking pain.
Sarah was deeply read, though not in books.
Deeper than any print her mind probed down
Into the shades of meaning in the rocks
Where fishes hide, and up into the heights
Where early blossoms turn to later fruit
And eggs to wingèd singers. And she saw
The sky reflected by the pensive sea,
Whence rolled the clouds in slowly shifted shapes,
Endlessly different in a void the same,
As if some huge and pondering memory dreamed
Within the brain of space on all things past—
Remembered—and then sped its thoughts again,
The wind its will, which tore the dreams apart
And then experimented with new forms
Dimly foreboded by the clouds above;
Unconsciously reflected by the sea;
Brought forth on earth in full reality.

And Sarah looked upon the face of plants
And saw the buds unclose long-fringèd eyes
To look with complex secrets at the sky.
And through the amber light of honeycombs
She watched the darkly moving, intent bee
Filling octagonal chambers, while the hives
With million myriad-murmured ecstasy,
Moved with the summer rhythm of their lives.

She found both seeds and eggs contained a plan
With which she must agree if she would reap
Increase and benefit for her own needs.
Thus saw things as they were, not as she wished
That they might be to suit some other scheme
That might do well enough on Mercury
Where wishes father facts upon desire.
No spectacles of words informed her brain,
Nothing but pictures of reality,
And feelings strong that bathed her pictured thoughts
With rays invisible and visible
Of warmth and radiance, yet pricked out the heights,
So was the inmost chamber of her self
As bright, and glowing as her days without
When the hot, glittering sun from tropic seas
Strikes ultra-violet; scarlet from high peaks
Important because something made them so.
Such was the constant weather of her soul,
Where words first sprang to blossom into acts
That ripened into fruit of ways and things.

VI

Thus stood this tree, young fruit upon its boughs,
When by long chances devious to tell
One Stephen Oldfields, Fellow out of Kings,
Sauntered one sunny day down Sarah's lane,
And thought he saw an eclogue come to life,
Furnished with flocks and children, Sarah's house,
The flowers, and the cove, and "wine-dark sea."
His was a soul that was as far removed
From Sarah's as the Alps from the Andes,
Opposing peaks on separate hemispheres,

Results of forces ships can never join.
Yet now in mid Atlantic they had met.
He left amid a negative applause
That deprecated musings on return
To all that made him everything he was,
And left him what he was not. Books he knew,
But looked upon the world with light-shy eyes.
And what remained of light which might have shone
Was much too dim to shine on something new.
It burned in memory by comparisons,
Reminding him of what someone had said
Of something else in England long ago;
What Horace meant, or Virgil; rags and tags
Of languages the living put on tombs,
Words beyond resurrection, cut from things,
And earth, and love, and happiness, and man,
By time's inevitable sickle reaped.
Garnered, and winnowed, gleaned—a grain from graves
That when transplanted festers in the dust.
Much had he seen since from the placid Cam
And from the lodge that looks like Crosby Hall
He left upon his travels, helped along,
By punctual envelopes from place to place.
Much had he seen; yet nothing much he saw.
Now partial to mild climates and the ease
With which a gentleman can settle down,
Forgetting all the scholar and his past,
Where cards dissolve all curiosities,
He settled down, dying by slow degrees,
But with good form on little maintenance.
Thus Stephen Oldfields strolled down Sarah's lane.

Oftener he came as many days went on,
For there was something here that he had missed.
The tentacles of earth to Sarah's talk
He misinterpreted for skill in words,
A kind of humble rhetoric he thought
That he might catch the voice of and, perchance,
Play Lazarus with to resurrect a pen
He sometimes fumbled with in gangrened hope,
And twilight reveries upon a style
So perfect that it never saw the day.
And all the natural forms of things about
That Sarah's spirit wrought with skillful hands,
Made perfect to their tasks, intrigued his eyes
With antique memories of the classic prime
His spirit thought to dwell in, for his soul,
Facing away from all reality,
Leaned backward for a bracing touch of earth
That souls once had who walked in balanced times
By seas as blue as Sarah's—times away.
All this, half thought, half felt, this "Roman" saw,
And with a kindness drawn from English ground
Reached out to take and—yet give in return
Some boon for hours passed beside the cove,
That might have made card partners stop and stare,
If they had known. And so it came about,
By slow advances and by small degrees,
The children found a mentor, and learned words
That only lived by letters, and went on
To read, and count, and cipher, and to speak
Of things they had to conjure out of sound.
They drew away, before their mother knew,
From her and life about, into themselves,

Bemused by books as later years spun on
That Stephen brought from England with a crest
Of Tudor roses, lily, and a lion,
While Stephen doted on this benefit,
Mouthing a little simile he heard
Of how the fullest harmony comes forth
Only when black *and* white keys on the board
Are played by master fingers. So he played.

His theme, however, lacked accompaniment,
And like a tag that captious children play,
Struck a few tuneful notes, a chord or two
By accident, and then in discords clanged
Louder and angrier, till a hail of fists
Threatened to tear the ivory from the keys
And ebony, too. Long after Stephen left
For coasts where every traveler's welcome home,
That fatal "tune" of his went jangling on,
Always with discord, till the taut strings broke,
Snarling amid the others; till no hands
That still had arms could urge forth harmony.
But seven years his voice went on and on
Talking to Sarah's children by the cove,
In a small, sheltered corner of the rocks,
Where he set up to be a church and school,
A master, priest, and mentor all in one,
But above all "a god from the machine"
To snatch his pupils up to higher ways
Than the low, dreamful coasts fate cast them on—
That somehow were so lovely, long and blue.
So Stephen was the "man from the machine"
Who loved the part of playing lucky god

To three poor victims of a fate perverse
He pitied, loved, and found his audience in.

Watch him enthroned, then, in a rocky chair,
His cloak thrown over it, and facing him
From three scooped niches in the sandy rock,
That like a lunar circle hemmed them in,
The faces of three "scholars," boy and girls,
The only souls in all the universe
Who pondered what poor Stephen had to say.
Just overhead a one-limbed cedar tree,
A giant wreck of what the storm had left,
Thrust from the rock with gesture Japanese
An arm with fifty hands, umbrella-like,
Moving and fragrant, murmuring, and a tent
Whose shadows fingered on the coral sand
With dimmer shadows of its ghostly self.
Here it was cool, and to this crescent niche
That overlooked the benches of the cove—
A box above a natural theater,
When tides were out and birds upon the stage—
Sarah had brought a porous earthen jar
Filled with a sweet lime drink for summer days.
Beside a pile of stone deep honeycombed
With cavities where Stephen stuffed his books,
Under the cedar shade it calmly stood
Like priest beside an altar. Stephen sat
Conveniently beside it, and between
His long orations to his patient flock
Libations marked the order of the day,
With kind Jamaica mixed for Stephen's part;
Plain water, for a rock that served for slate,

To wash the childish scrawls of chalk away.
Here were the mysteries of arithmetic
Expounded, and the names of distant towns,
And famous men and battles told by rote,
With legends, stories sacred and profane,
In streams of sound that fell from Stephen's lips
With all the pent-up ardor of the years;
While cherished memories of might-have-beens
Floated before his eyes, of parliaments
His grandfather had talked to, lost to him
By a too constant run of lucky cards
That marked a knave forever. Thus alone,
But tired of flitting nowhere, now he talked,
And settled down at last to honest play;
To while away the evenings till he died,
And had the service like a gentleman
And scholar that he was—or might have been.
Curious these three should be his audience!
But so they were, and when the girls dropped out
He fastened all his hope on Trevlock's boy,
And swore that he would fill that half-caste brain,
Brilliant and eager in a handsome head,
With something seldom found in colonies.
So "James recited," and his master talked,
And talked for seven years beside the sea.

VII

But sorrow came for Sarah from his words,
For as her children grew from year to year
Their eyes were slowly closed to all her world.
They slipped by trivial things away from her:

Stephen's proud charity, the rector's boast,
Winners of prizes, much at Sunday school,
Employed on errands by the white folks round
Who whispered stories of their "origin,"
And made a point of saving them behind
The back of their proud mother, thankful yet
That so much interest had been made for them
At courts where she could never go at all.
But once she went into her children's world,
To church and sat in someone's vacant pew,
Proud of her children and their mannered ways,
And with long pondered words upon her lips
To thank the rector and his pretty wife,
And Mr. Oldfields, and the others, too,
For all that they had done by her and hers.
Yes, she would wait for them outside the door,
And thank them, with the children by her side,
While the bells rang, and then go in and pray
With all the rest in proper gratitude,
For much she thought she should be grateful for.
So from a long neglected teakwood chest
That Trevlock once had brought her years before,
A scarlet gown, an Indian *palimpore*
With Siva legends ramping on its breast
And curious vines and faces interlaced
About the bodice, she with pride put on,
Snapped bangles on her arms, and thrust a comb
Of tortoise shell amid her wire-like locks
That curled like tendrils carved upon her brows,
And took the little girls each by the hand,
With James, her son, and hopeful went to church.

It seemed as if a Hindu goddess walked
Into the little church. The moving fans
Of half a hundred ladies stopped as one.
A red hibiscus burned in Sarah's hand
Like some enameled lotus from a star
Where gods and leopards loll in perfumed glades
And triple moons look down on lovers' walks
Amid gigantic blossoms and spice trees,
So heathen, and so beautiful was she,
No one could laugh, and so they hated her.
The church and nature were at visible odds;
And what the men thought all the women knew.
Poor Stephen Oldfields trembled in his shoes
And wished that he had never been so kind.
Here was a scandal glorious and true,
And beautiful as sin, and robed in red,
Burning before the altar in a pew.
This was the last time Sarah ever came
Amid the virtuous haunts of Christian men
Till old age dimmed her beauty, and the tale
Died from the lips of those who died with it.
For it so happened on that Sabbath day
The lesson dealt with whores of Babylon,
And scarlet robes, and beasts with many heads,
A feast of color ten millenniums old
That falls like manna on stark Western minds
Starving for staff-of-life in imagery.
Under the sure lay reader Sarah sat
And felt the burning focus of all eyes
Until it seemed the eagle lectern moved;
Mewed at her; waved its brazen wings, and screamed.
She rose, and running blindly down the aisle,

Gasped in the sunlight like a fish in air,
Then found herself safe in her house again,
Exhausted as if there had been a storm.
Almost she thought to find James Trevlock there,
Lying upon the threshold, battered thin,
Battered, but not by water. So had hate
And fear surged round her spirit, she was spent
As on the day the mighty tempest blew.

Numb for a while she lay, and then awoke
To find herself alone. Within the house
There stirred the silent wraiths of summer air,
Trailing the glimmering curtains in and out.
The sunlight beat across the empty door,
While low and liquid voices at the cove
Were overheard in quiet argument,
Like a long conversation heard at night
In which the listener strives to catch his name,
Fails, and then sleeps, and then awakes again
To hear those moonlight voices talking on
About he knows not what, or good, or ill.
So Sarah heard sea voices by the cove;
Then lapsed again into a tired sleep;
Then started up to catch upon the breeze
The sound of organ singing far away.
Her children were still sitting in the church—
Whether she left them there, or if they stayed
Themselves amid their friends, she never knew.
Only she felt she lost them once for all—
Knew that they lived in other worlds than hers—
And why it was they could not handle bees,
Nor row the boat like Simon, milk the goats,

Or plant so that the seed to flowers grew.
No, they would never really talk with her,
Or love the feel of loam about their feet
And rain upon their faces. House and clothes
And money for soft dresses, ribboned hair,
And books, and words, and other ways were theirs
Now and forever and forever more.

So Sarah thought while listening to the hymn,
And drank her quiet cup of agony
While the tune floated on the morning wind
And died into the voices of the cove.
These she could always listen to, and have,
And if she could not make her children hear
What wind and water, sun and earth might say,
Then she would keep that secret for herself
And let them keep their world away from her.
She would not tell them what they could not hear;
She could not show them what they would not see.
This was the limitation of her life.
The seed in them must grow its separate way.
She wept and put her dress back in the chest.
And waited for the children quietly.
But they came back with wonder in their eyes,
And tales how after church the people stopped
And talked to them, and had been very kind—
Kinder than usual—and then they laughed,
Saying their mother had been scared away,
While she sat silent, and the usual meal
Passed with the hour, and so passed that day—
And all the days that followed, different now.

VIII

Like fish left in a shallow marshy lake
With silted opening to the living sea;
Beyond the reach of any ocean tides,
Or seasonal visitors from depths; cut off
From everything except the clouds above
And the slow change of seasons, or the rings
The deadly fisher or the stork might make,
Upon the surface of their stagnant mere—
The villagers dwelt in the hamlet close
By Sarah's house. Their passing half-shades fell
Translucently upon the shimmering sand,
Then drifted slowly into shadows while
Those that were left kept breathing steadily
With large, incurious, and unseeing eyes
Suspended as it were in sleepy light.
Summer, the dreamer, slumbered in their streets.

Into this stagnant neighborhood of men
Sarah's sleek daughters easily merged their lives;
They married and they left their mother's house;
Eager to drop its onerous earthy tasks,
Care of the bees, the flowers, and the birds;
The sea, the wind, the sunshine dull to them.
They grew ashamed of all their mother's ways
And only came to visit her by night
When gossip was dried up, or neighbors failed.
Or when they needed things that Sarah had.
Scarce might grandchildren toddle round her house
For fear the curious ways that Sarah had
Of kinship with the earth that lay about
Might wean these babies from the world of men.

Sarah alone grew firmer in her strength;
Increased a dignity that year by year
Dwarfed her own progeny and made them seem
Poor to themselves when they would visit her.
She lived to be; they only lived to have.
What Being said to Having was so nil
They always came with baskets, filled them full—
After some words perfunctory by the hearth—
And left their mother looking at the fire.
Then laughed and felt themselves at ease again,
Out in the dark, with baskets on their arms,
Heavy with something gravity made real,
Till they heard Sarah talking to herself,
Talking aloud now that she had grown old,
As if she spoke with someone that was near!

This is the act that lets the spirit pray
Within itself; that finds another there
Beyond the earth, the water and the air.
This is the truth the church keeps hid away;
This is the hope beyond all bitter care,
St. Francis and the birds, the natural prayer.
This is the life, well hated by the state,
With which philosophy can never mate—
Until she rides upon a poet's pen—
Something not found within the measurer's den
That merges being with a strength beyond.
Then Boston thunders down on Walden Pond.
And man can only speak with man again.

So Sarah grew a mystery to her own
Who looked upon her as a source for gifts

And nothing more. Impatient at her way
Of living, and of doling mite by mite,
Her children kept on harping on the things—
Much grown by legend—that the neighbors said
Sarah still kept in chests their father brought.
Sometimes they came and questioned her of him
And what he gave her, and a rumor brought,
Which had come wandering from a tropic clime
Over the Southern shoulder of the world,
Of how, forgetfully, James Trevlock rode
In phaëtons on Demerara's *bund*
With a rich merchant's daughter by his side,
And children smiling through their golden hair.
This Sarah heard, and pondered, and put down
Into her well of sorrow deep and cool,
Amid the shadows where the rank ferns grew
In twilight of lost hopes and memories—
And walked amid her garden—and lived on.

James was a lawyer now, young James, her son,
Much profiting by Stephen Oldfields' zeal,
Who taught him at the parsonage year by year
After that day that Sarah came to church—
Careful no careless words should mar a name
He once had marred in England, careful now!
And many an evening Jimmy used to spout
The Bard to Sarah, *Hamlet* and *King Lear:*
"Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! rage! blow!
You cataracts and hurricanoes, spout . . ."
And Sarah knew how hurricanoes spout,
And how this boy had come to her from them,
Who now was full of nothing but the sound

Of useless words—with gestures—on he went:
Lear wandered in the storm without a house,
And cursed his children who had gotten all.
But Sarah laid Lear's misery to her heart,
Against a time she knew must surely come,
And profited thus far by clanging words
That Stephen Oldfields wrapped about her son
To draw him from her in their woven net,
While only she felt what they really meant—
Not that she had a name for tragedy,
But with the poet triumphed through the storm.

Yet here was sorrow, too, for Sarah knew
That if this man with gift of ancient words,
And all his friends with all their gifts of words
Had never found her house beside the sea,
She might have kept her children and alone
Brought them the things words stand for; let them feel
What life is by sheer living it in acts.
There was a life she knew, that they called "God,"
And went to church about it, but she felt
And saw, and dealt with; it with her. And round
Her head was wrapped its mystery of stars;
Its voice was in the wind, and in the light
And warmth she felt it beating, and beheld
The ebb and flow of it from plant to seed,
And down the generations of the birds
And dogs and goats that lived about her door.
It ran in warmth of milk across her hands;
It streamed in endless mornings from the sun,
When he came suddenly out of the sea;
Was still about her at the cool of night

And yet again at morning—glory out
Of glory out of glory, hence removed
But only changed when something stopped to die.
This was the golden wellspring of her soul,
Sparkling with life beyond the needs of men
Who seemed to her to have withdrawn from it,
And not to know they were a part of it,
And still might share, for it was all about
But they had words that once had root in things
And then had lost them. So they now had words
Without the life to make the sound alive.

So things she gave to James and to the girls,
For that was all she had that they could take.
They had the gold their father left for them,
The girls when they were married, and for Jim
The last gold pieces when called to the bar,
The talk of twenty hamlets. Still she gave;
Still as the years went on they came for more,
The cloth, the chairs, the *things* their father brought.
Their mother was a fountain spouting things,
And all her strength they thought must be in them;
Must flow from pots and carpets. She was strong;
And they were weak. They felt it, and they lacked,
And lacked, and asked—and still they asked for more.
All that she had at last, for James had grown
Cunning with little wisdom, and he drew
A document that Sarah was to sign
To let her children have the house and plot
With all else she still had, but live with them—
Either with him or at a daughter's house,
Or at a daughter's house, or else with him.

Only in that James was a little vague;
Just when, and where, and how was somewhat dim.
Thus for an evening in the little house
He and his sisters argued 'round the lamp
While Sarah sat, her face between her hands.
Sometimes in Egypt in the burning skies
That glare for centuries on a rainless place,
A cloud is seen, and lightning, and there rolls
Thunder amid the thirsty hills, and rain
Falls in a torrent, then is seen no more,
Then light reverberates again in space.
So Sarah's anger fell on them that night;
So flashed her eyes, and so her deepened tones
Rumbled it seemed at first, and then flashed out
Upon a generation that sat numb
Under the sudden storm of words, and tears
That rained upon the table and the floor
And in the chests while she dragged forth the things,
Heaping them in the centre of the room,
And bringing pots that rattled, and white spoons
Of silver, and the plates, and glittering knives,
And clocks, and stuffs, and carpets, and carved chairs,
And many a rustling dress and gauzy scarf
From long kept secret places. All she had,
Down to the last red feather Trevlock brought,
She piled beside the table where the lamp
Shed a warm glow upon the tangled mass,
Like sunset on a lucky wrecker's hoard
Piled on the beach before the carters come.
Across this now she faced her children, three
Tense faces, waiting for they knew not what,
Until she spoke, scarce mistress of herself.

Sarah was laughing-crying, yet amused,
Yet trembling now and then like an old leaf
That flutters after having braved the storm;
Trembling when memories shook her, yet she said,
"Take it; and take it all! I keep the house,
And only what my hands and I have made,
All you despise. The ground you shall not have,
Nor have this roof, not even when I die,
For these are mine and are a part of me
I cannot give unless I give myself.
You might have had me too, and all with me—
If you knew what 'all' meant—but take the things—
All that I have that is not of myself.
Only one thing I keep I have not made,
This gift to me your father Trevlock brought."
Then from a pot inside the window space
She spilled the flowers and the black earth out,
And groping in the mold, drew forth a string
Of flashing beads that rippled in the light,
Till each looked at the other and forgot
The pile of spoil before them. Sarah laughed,
Seeing their avid faces. How she laughed!
A sound more terrible than gasping sobs,
For her laugh choked her. Suddenly her arms
Flashed up, and with it flashed the twinkling string.
With all her force she dashed it on the floor,
Where the cord broke; the beads went rolling 'round,
And after them her children on their knees,
Scrambling and snatching, while their mother's voice,
Released as if from some long agony,
Pealed in victorious laughter; caroled and rang.
And her long hands leaped out and seized a broom

And swept the rolling beads out of the door,
And beat about the children till they fled
Half crouching, and still clutching after things,
Until the whole pile followed, and the door
Banged—and the bar shot home, and Sarah sat
Panting beside the table with her broom,
Alone with her own soul and what it made.
All things that fortune brought her had been swept
Into the outer darkness and the past,
Where voices growled about them in the night,
And lanterns bobbed, and bickerings went on,
Then died away still quarreling over things,
A horrid noise of fighting, family war.
But peace remained with Sarah; silence, too,
And while the lamp burned smoothly and the moths
Came battering about the crystal glare,
Her head drooped slowly to her pillowed arms
Folded upon the table, and she slept.
Into the darkness streamed her little light
Unheeded till its essence burned away.

IX

Thus Sarah slept, and woke in a lone world,
And that was almost fifty years ago.
Her children's generation passed away,
Leaving the things, or what was left of them,
While time went on, and great-grandchildren came
Peeping at Sarah's house. She let them play
About the place with puppies and the kids,
And loved them while they played thus, but they grew
Out of her secret, the inheritance.

That Sarah felt went with the land and house;
Which those who could not find it should not share.

In still communion Sarah has lived on,
Withdrawn, beyond the island life about
That feels the drag of tides upon its shores
Turning the currents of sequestered lives
Towards cities that are magnets to our world,
Like moons that lay their influence on the seas
Through seasons of their waxing sovereignty—
When all things set toward them—till they wane.
A star above that strongly ebbing tide,
That mariners can steer by, if they will,
Still Sarah's lamp burns when the darkness falls;
On land a square of light that never moves.
But lays calm orange glow upon the cove
As if it were to welcome someone home
Who plies his trade in darkness, or at sea.
High overhead with outstretched giant arms,
Sweeping in mighty circling beams about
The whole horizon with a lurid light,
The lighthouse beams shoot out; move round and
glow;
And then dart out again—so all night long,
Warning all men of danger on those coasts
Where Sarah has found peace for ninety years.
Together both lights shine, one high, one low.

And some men think that when the seasons run,
As run they will in cycles, and the tide
Sweeps back again, imperial lighthouses
Will go the way imperial things do go.

When owls about their shattered lenses flit,
When pharos, camp, and theater are still,
Then from such lights as Sarah's will stream out
A glow to welcome tired fishers home
Or toilers from the twilight-misty fields—
After the kings and cities have their will,
After the long streets shiver and grow still,
When traceries of cellars mock the moon—
A lamp upon the cottage window sill.

HADRIAN AT TIVOLI

HADRIAN AT TIVOLI

Above the long white peristyle
I see the cones of cypresses,
Italian sunlight on the tile,
The lily ponds with ibises,
While I, who am the master here,
And sovereign lord of discontent,
Await my master drawing near
Who is not half so impotent.

Whither then, pallid one,
Where will you flit to,
Whither then, rigid one,
Poor moth of destiny—
Sad little winged one,
Hurrying soul of me?

Only once on this earth comes the face
That is bright with the love of the soul,
With the love that we need to be whole;
And I who am worshiped on earth,
I, Cæsar, a god but a man,
I sought it, disguising with mirth
The steps of my wandering span.
And my dreams I had built into brick,
Into temples and bridges that rose
Down the roads of the world as I went,

Though my soul it lay heavy and sick
On the needles of sharp discontent
In the beds that it built for repose.

Faces like the gods on coins
Drugged my dreams, but who purloins
His happiness must pay despair.
So I clutched my wraith desire
In a Cretan virgin's hair.
I was warmed by Libyan maids
Lipped and breasted like the Sphinx;
Comforted by hips like Hathor's
Matched with green eyes of the lynx.
Tired I grew of my lone body;
Many evenings have I strayed
In Oronte's starlit gardens
Envying hidden boy and maid.

So I built this house of Cæsar,
Sacking temples for my ease,
And the ravished dreams of sculptors
Look across my cypress trees,
While the toneless conchs of tritons
In mosaic wake the floors,
Foaming round the bows of heroes
Rowing past Homeric shores.
Yet the falling rainbows mix
With the darkening stream of Styx.

Shall I bid my coiffed Egyptians
Read from painted books of Pasht,

Or command the Greek musicians'
Lyric wires and cymbals clashed?
Æsculapius himself
Could not cure my soul's disease!
Nostrums that his priests dispense—
What are these?

Give me the day of my life,
That hour forever the same,
When we rode through the Bithynian hills
With our helmets and vesture aflame;
When in fire from Olympian snow
Like Apollo he sat by the spring
Where at evening the young shepherds go
To water their flocks and to sing.

Lift up your face to me now
As you lifted it up to me then.
Aurelius the lord of the world
Would look on its beauty again—
On those eyes like a Greek afternoon,
On that leonine frontlet that curled,
Bright as nuggets from mountains of Spain,
Bright with joy that I turned into pain.

Though I gave you a tomb in a star,
And your brows are a dream for the race,
Yet you trouble me now and you mar
My sleep and my days in this place,
O beautiful shepherd I stole,
Till I ask of my fluttering soul.

Whither then, lonely one,
Where will you flit to,
Whither then, pallid one
Poor moth of destiny?
Sad and unmated one,
Hurrying soul of me,
Hadrian's dying here,
Dying at Tivoli!

THE ISLE OF HORSES

INTRODUCTION

An old man, the survivor of a shipwreck upon an enchanted island, tells how the sorceress of the isle attempted to turn his comrades to swine. Owing to the youthful strength and nobility of the mariners' spirits she could only succeed in changing them into horses. Years later the one man who escaped hears by chance from a fisherman that his comrades, although still horses, are alive and young. Desiring to renew his youth with them, he decides to return to the island. Of his adventures there the poem speaks.

THE ISLE OF HORSES

That night he left.
His eager oarlocks clicked into the dark
As if a clock told time into the past,
As tho' it ticked him back to yesterdays,—
Back to that island in a younger world
Where horses and their strength were once the thing. . . .

At last the island, the horned peaks,
The lightning flashing inland sullenly—
The sea was hardly wrinkled when he rowed
Into an oval harbor with a beach
So smooth that it reflected streaks of stars.
Such stars, they seemed the hyacinths of heaven,
Or frost-rimed globes of waxen clustered grapes
Hung overhead to tempt poor travelers there.
And underneath this arbor he walked on—
A path he knew—a twisted tree stood yet—
A great bird dreamed there, black, with smoldering eyes;
The very branch seemed withered where it perched.
It looked as if it might be waiting for . . . ?

There in a flash of lightning lay the herd!

They lay with worn hoofs flung amid the grass,
Their hocks grown shaggy like old aloe clumps.
Others lay featly as slim unicorns,
With ready, nimble curve of supple knees;
Some slept among the meadow's rippled waves
And fetched their sudden breath as long and deep
As those bleached monsters from unangled depths
That rock a ship to fill black lungs with air.
All else was still, as if they waited dead
For some cold voice to hail them from the stars.
Till he cried, "Comrades!" called them each by name:
"Nicanor, Zat, Urion, Rigel, Don, . . .
Ho! This is Tibalt come to find you here!"

Their neigh, it seemed, tore through the grass like flame;
Earth shook, and they were all about him soon,
Trembling like centaurs that have scent of gods.
They formed a ring of nostrils and white eyes,
So he was orator to horses, with
Soft noses in his hands, and clover breath,
Damp, warm and sweet, upon his neck and cheeks;
A mad, dumb welcome that bespoke the soul
Behind the brute's long face, grown sorrowful,
Grown sorrowful with age; he cringed at that,
For he had thought their strength would keep them young.

They wept together that they had grown old,
Their heads hung low, with long and drooping manes;
His beard flowed sorrowfully across his breast;

Round tears dropped down upon his hands while stars
Burned more intensely like blue funeral lamps
Hung in the vaults of old priest-guarded tombs.

By that sad light poor Tibalt dimly saw
Ranged round the herd on every tree there sat
The sunless birds that wait for beasts to die,
Ruffling their silent plumage in the dark;
With muffled croakings dropping down and down
From branch to branch like withered autumn leaves;
At every hopeful silence drawing nigh.

But he loved stars too well to fear the night.
He woke the herd up with his hero's cry,
"Shake shadows off!"—
Their neigh made billowed darkness eddy back;
It startled sleeping eagles,—and they streamed
A gallop, gallop, gallop through the night,
As if poor Tibalt led them on to hope.

What hills they burst their hearts on; how they sank,
By pools or in the desert, each one knew.
Till only one among them thundered on
With Tibalt on his back whose tattered cloak
Flapped like a bat's wing at the haggard moon.
It seemed a devils' land they entered on,
No meadows now, the very stones struck fire,
As if the warmth of Tophet lingered yet,
A landscape just three miles outside of hell.
There on the mountain was the sorceress' house,
A glow behind its pillars like a fire;
Below was Tibalt riding for his life.

Or was it life? The huge horse staggered on
Into a vale where no breeze ever blew,
With dust that flowed like water; splashed like spray,
A valley in the midst of evil hills,
Flat-browed and horned, where lightnings flickered
blue
From peak to peak, as if the giants flashed
Unrusted blades at fence amid the stars.
And once the traveling moon, so fast they rode,
Slid low behind the pillars on the crest—
Five black bars fell across the valley floor—
A furnace gate into an ashen place,
A trap for souls, a gate that must have clicked,
When Tibalt took the path down to the lake.

About it, gallows-armed, the cacti grew.
And, ah-h-h! Its waters! They were bitter salt,
A drink of disappointment Tibalt found,
No draught of youth, no vigor for old veins.
His horse stood still and lolled its tongue in dust;
While he sat still, both still as little birds,
That look through moonlight at a horny eye,
For such the lake seemed, glittering at the moon.

Out from the socket of that eye there grew,
Fringing the oval center darkly clear,
Long, undulating, yellow water plants
Like iris round a pupil always still
Of a huge eye uncovered by the earth.
To spy upon her enemies the stars
With hatred beyond thought, dim with green slime

Of floating cataracts, and horned around
The edges with dull plants, it liquid lay
And glittered knowingly upon the moon,
Amid the demon ridges that swept 'round
And 'round it like the wrinkles of earth's skull.
Here *He* might come to sit and whet his scythe,
Pondering a plague, and whistling through his teeth,
Watching his bird-track pinked along the dust,
You know Him well, or shall . . . Here Tibalt stopt
And felt his soul drawn down into that eye.

Deep in the pupil of that eye he saw
Upon a rock ledge like a crocodile,
A pot the filtered moonlight turned aglow,
Strange as a note within a serpent's eye,
As mystic as the sun in wells at noon.
Glittering as if it might have held lost youth. . . .

How splendidly he dived!

Flashed like the dauntless Tibalt of old days
Straight through the moon-black water—clasped the
pot—
And then—
Something struck at him from a cavern door,
The pot sank with him, and one wrinkle crawled
As if the lake had shut its lidless eye.

Not it—it stared unwinking at the stars:
Grew Tophet-black, and in the setting moon,
Wide as the night-eye of an octopus

It watched poor Tibalt's horse hang down his head;
The white mane float across its liquid stare,
The eyes grow nearer, closer to its face,
While overhead the sunless birds began
To waft impatient gyres above the pool.

DESCENT INTO HADES

DESCENT INTO HADES

"He descended into hell."

I

While the world slept, sad Joseph came,
Arimathea, with a linen shroud,
And Peter who had done with fear
To beg for him that died the first.
Broken, they begged in Syriac,
While Caius, grim centurion, sat,
With mouth curved like an eagle's beak,
Munching his flour-cake and beans,
And gulping sour, country wine
Out of his iron helmet while
He spat, and buckled on his greaves,
And rose. "Venus! These sorry Jews!
Only six coins, and silver ones
At that!" Oh, well, he'd set a watch
Upon the tomb—the man was dead—
"*Ehu!* A bloody bargain after all!
'King of the Jews!' Poor madman, he . . .
Ha, you Polycarp, get up
And let the veterans sleep awhile."
The Greek arose beside the fire.

Now morning dazed the eastern stars,
And in the growing half light up

The skully, barren hill they went,
Three crosses dim against the sky
Where the last stars still burned.
The thief upon the left still
Muttered low. "Water!" he hissed, and died.
"Hurry, the ladder," Caius snapped,
"Before the day is on us." So
Peter stood beside the cross
And shivered while the cocks crowed on
Down in the valley, cheerfully.
Along the road to Lebanon
Hurried a haggard figure, bent,
Afraid of its own shadow. Now
It stopped beside an orchard and
Turned in. But now the ladder came.

Against the cross they laid it, then
Young Polycarp, the Greek, climbed up.
But, oh, that face of woe, those
Sunken eyes, the tired, hurt mouth!
Where seemed to linger, yet inaudible
Sad as the shadows of those eyes,
And darker still, some word unutterable
That only man might speak, a last
Farewell to hope! Poor Polycarp
Could never look with joy at gods
Smiling beside their altars from
That day. Always that face he saw,
And heard the song of owls, as now
He heard them in the valley drear,
Hooting about the tombs. A sad
Grace and mercy filled him utterly

With sorrow for his fellows. Ah!
That face went with him everywhere!
And he would weep as now he wept.
Lifting the thorns off of the brow,
He took his soldier's cloak and wiped
The blood and tears away, and trembled,
While, as if it were his own flesh,
Tenderly,
He from the wide-flung beam those
Outstretched hands from nails removed,
And then the wounded feet, and clasped—
Scarcely a weight, it seemed. A glow
As if that body beat forth life
Suffused him where he stood upon
The ladder, tottering, and a dawn
Beat on his armor, seething
Goldenly, while he came down
And laid his burden on the linen
Shroud that Joseph spread below.
Sadly, with tears of pure despair,
Peter and Joseph swathed their hope,
And gathered up their burden, while
The light gained on the darkness 'mid
Its long and snowy folds, and they
Down rock-scarred places to deep
Shadows bore their burden; down
The valley to the fresh-hewn tomb
Where owls still flitted eerily,
Tho' all about, above them, flamed
Hilltops with light enormous, and
The sun rose upon Zion, rose
To sound of harps and psalteries

Lifted on the morning air
Where the priests sang at sacrifice.

Scarce had the hum of instruments
Passed from the air like wings away,
When a low wailing fell upon
Their ears, and tired weeping, so
Even the Romans started, stopped,
And hailed three wraithy figures by
A tomb, like spirits of the place,
That moved toward them, hesitant,
Until the deep, the strong, sad voice
Of Joseph cried them, "Peace, we have
Him here." And then the women came
Flitting across the shadows, both
The Marys; Martha, and the wife
Of Joseph, bending down with cries
And streaming hair about that cloudy
Form; weeping, and stretching empty
Hands to heaven with low cries,
Save one who cried aloud three times,
"My son!"—but sank down stricken. Thus
They all stood there and breathed awhile
In agony they could not bear,
Amid the fleering shadows, while
The soldiers watched, and leaned upon
Their spears, and waited silently.
Then in his breast the heart of Caius
Woke at sight of Mary's face,
Touched by some memory, perhaps,
The money from his pouch he drew
And poured the silver coins into

Her lap, whereat her weary tears
More frequent fell, while with her lips
She blessed him, gathering up the price
Of her own flesh returned to her
By him; accepting it, while he,
The hardened soldier, sudden felt
The thick walls of his heart dissolve
Like melting shells—felt young again,
And strangely innocent. And straight
His head he lifts and cries, "A new
Day dawns, arise, tarry not here.
Hark to the morning trumpets blow!"
They heard them from Antonio,
And all the streets of Zion woke;
In hills about Jerusalem
The silver clangor died away.
Yet surely never mortal horns
Wound reveille like that which smote
Their ears and rang amid the vales,
Till the long shadows fled as if
Immortal sound echoed at last,
And rode on light and flowed into
The tombs. Even the soldiers stood
Amazed awhile. Then Peter took
His Master and with Joseph graspt
His snowy cerement that glowed
As if the morning gathered there.
And they two with the women bore
Their sorrow's burden tenderly,
And brought it carefully, and laid
Their hope of morning in the tomb.
Caius a guard set by the door

And sat himself upon a rock,
While cloaks were spread and stones began
To click and flash again for clothes
That had been diced for twenty times
Between that sun and this. Meanwhile
Within the twilight sepulcher
A cry arose again and died,
Startling the sentry at the door,
Who peering in beheld full length
The gray and blue-veined form of one
Upon a hollowed pedestal,
And chips about the threshold, fresh,
But newly from the hillside hewn,
And a huge boulder poised above.

With sounds that fluttered as if grief
Herself were stricken and complained
In there, beneath the wrapt and
Shadowed head the Marys laid
A many-folded, scented towel,
While Peter took the outstretched hands
And placed them on his Master's breast.
Joseph meanwhile the limbs composed,
And all shrank at the bitter wounds,
Thinking how tenderly he lived
Who bore them now so silently.
Then with pure water they had brought
From Hebron's spring the night before
And borne upon their heads, the women
Bathed the sleeper hastily
And wiped away the bitter reek

Of pain and sweat of agony,
Closing the shadowed eyes at last
That glimmered with despair, while near
Those smitten lips that shadowy framed
Their unheard syllables of woe,
Mary leaned down and whispered
As if she comforted a child
As once she did, times gone, and let
His head rest on her breast awhile.
Then Peter took her, and they went
Away, and left the others there.

Arimathea from a box
Of ivory his unguents took,
That scented all the morning air
With balm of Gilead. With these
He cleansed the grievous wounds, the hands,
The feet, the head, the piteous side,
The scourgèd shoulders; while with tears
That scalded her sad, trembling hands,
Anna, his wife, a precious cup
Held for a basin underneath
The wounds to catch the balm-and-blood,
And water from the spearthrust in
The side. This mixed with essences
Fell in the golden bowl between
Two silver, wingèd handles that
Outspread above, beyond it, and
Watched like the wings that brooded on
The Sea of Chaos once, so these
Now in-little, yet the same,

Thus looked again upon a tide
Where old Confusion triumphed still—
Yet waited for the spirit to
Begin. Swept down those silver wings
And pinions into involutes
On folds of glittering garments that
Enwrapped the hidden angel of
The cup, whose shrouded form beneath
Its argent garments shone with life
And age-enduring radiance.
Down from the angel's feet the metal
Ran in golden waves that broke
Upon a level space, as if the Sea
Of Mercy rolled beneath the eye
Of God and bore that angel form,
And made the base of that fair cup.
A cup made for King Solomon,
A cup that went to Babylon,
Carried away to Shinar with
The loot of Zion's Temple;
Rescued; brought back; and cherished long
In secret places, now once more
Put to the use of sacrifice,
To hold the blood of David's Son.
So Anna on her knees now held
It up to Joseph like a priest
Who washed those holy wounds, and
Lapped his prince in spices and
Long folds of glimmering linen, and
With care, shrouded the cup in
Napkins; hid it well behind
The shadows of the rocky bier,

Close by the covered head, lest those
Who watched outside with sword and spear
Should rob him of it when he passed.
One long last look they took and
Left Him in the shadows there;
The women down the valley walked;
The sound of grieving died away.
Then Caius looked within the tomb,
Nodded and put his shoulders to
The stone that poised itself above
The door, and thrust against it—
Powerfully. The stone fell down,
Blotting the cavern's entrance like
An eye that closes, and forever,
On the soul, its secrets, and the
Life that burned within—gone—
Gone into darkness and forgot.
Joseph of Arimathea, now
Broken and feeble, leaning on
His staff, departed haltingly,
And weakly came into his house
That stood near by to Golgotha.
Closing the door, the good man prayed,
And Anna with him while they wept.

II

He on His Father's breast awoke
In paradise, about the hour
Of the third watch about the tomb,
When Caius shivered in his cloak,
And half the other souls on earth

Were waiting death in sleep, swift as
An angel flitting star by star
Christ came across the interspace
Between us and the world without,
And through the roots of mountains passed,
And stood near Jesus in the tomb.
Over the long swathed form that Glory
Leaned, floating in the middle air
Unseen, yet powerful with life.
Then like a plunging star it fell.
Burst forth intolerable light
Like levin burning stones, and
Glowed with furnace-white the tomb
Through liquid fissures of the rocks,
As if the day were in its womb.
What had gone forth came back again,
And Jesus Christ arose. The stone
Pressed outward by the light fell down.
The sentry screamed, and groveling there,
Beheld forever, till he died,
An angel bathing in the sun.
Blinded, that soldier died of light,
That rolled beyond the world; light
He could see when blind. This tale
Much int'rested blind Caiaphas—
Troubled his priestly soul next day
When he examined Caius and
His men still dazzled by the light.
What happened? No one surely knew.
And yet the high priest felt they did
Not lie. He sat and mused awhile.
"You will be laughed at if you talk,"

He said, and stroked his beard and smiled
In his blind way, in his blind way.

But in his body incorruptible
The Son of Man down caverns walked
Through archèd vistas in the earth,
Huge as the nest of oceans dried
By ancient fires long purged away,
Ribbed, vaulted, buttressed miles-high,
And domed with darkness that uprose
On columns of pure darkness, darker yet,
The murky cloisters of old Night
Where he has fled from stars
And stays unseen, where Silence sits
Thinking her wordless thoughts, where
No dawns are, no beat of wings,
No winds, nor anything but Night
Waiting until the dayspring dies,
In midmost antres of this star.
Here hide the souls who are afraid
Of God and of themselves, not He
But they have flung them there.
Down from the tombs they droop, afraid
Of life, and hope, and memory, of
Themselves, of one another, and
Of God. They come to hide away,
Negations with duration. Here
They stay in windowless cathedrals
Without prayer, forgotten and forgot,
Forgetting not. Mem'ry the Lion
Waits silently for each, and each
For him, and no one ever moves.

So in the depths of space are old,
Blind stars that check themselves across
Titanic voids of utter night,
Each others' perfect counterpoise—
Something must move them from without,
Or else . . . Now came His light to souls
Where evil balanced evil that
It wrought, creating nothing, death.
Dead lay the dead when kindly dawned
This Sun of Life upon their plight,
And drew them with him as he moved
Across their dark. Robed in the bright
And sheerest essences of light,
He walked in flame immaculate,
Intolerant of any hue
Less perfect than clear glory is.
Save that the wounds upon his hands
And feet shone duller white,
And seemed to throw enormous shade
Of lesser sheen in darkness, when
He raised His arms to bless, and smote
A cross of living light along
The pit. Near him, and like a moon
Less bright with a reflected glow,
Yet glorious, there moved the cup
As though envaned on silver wings.
Thus down enormous gulfs they glide
Moving as one by unseen influence,
Miraculous as sun and earth,
While all before them and behind arose
A cry like winds in deserts, voices
Lone and far in darkness as the tones

Of one who drowns and hears beneath
The waves his own last cry, far off,
Beyond the ears of men and hope,
Shouting to God to save him.
And the light beat down upon a sea
Of faces long forgotten, dreams beyond
The memory of their dreamer—upon hands
That whitened like the crests of waves
Upon a midnight ocean and
Dissolved into the dark again.
Such were they, and so had they been
Remembered only by themselves
And that which made them what they were,
But now recalled them from the dark—
For even Judas now could see
The light—and followed, though far off.
Up from the scoriac floor he rose
Where from the tree his soul had been
Flung down as from a catapult
Amid deep ashes. Already
Eternity had passed for him,
Tho' only twice the day had dawned
Without—and now again the light!
So he arose from where he hid
Himself from it, with bitten lips
That now might ask forgiveness for
The kiss that hurled him into night.

Huge as the span from which the moon
Was torn like Eve from Adam's side,
Within the Earth there is a hall

Where all the souls who lost themselves
Since man began, rushed in
Like rivers to the sea. And there
Through pointed arches high in dark,
And roofed from stars by vaults
And lanterns grim carved out by fire
To make a cloister-house for space
And church for night—now down that nave
And great cathedral windowless
Beat the long golden rays
And laved about the bulge of columns
Large, and the pillars of the world
That bear up mountains and the seas.
No sound was uttered in that pit,
Lest it should seem too small to live;
The air was dry and still, but on a mount
Terraced by unremembered fires,
And altar-like, the Christ now stood
With outstretched wounded hands to bless,
A living cross of light, the hope
Of hopeless souls lapped in by Earth,
Their priest, their candle, and their god.
Above Him shone the holy cup,
Hung like an altar lamp that gleams
Above the golden radiance of the mass
Only reflecting glory, small,
Yet capable in darkness, made
To light the church when all are gone,
Save some lost one who waits to pray
And takes the light home in his heart.
Towards this the hope of those lost souls
Now turned, and raising up his hands

Toward heaven, and his face with bright
Appeal, offered the cup on high.

Smote down upon it suddenly
A flowing stream of light that sprang
To meet the radiance from uplifted
Hands, both lights were one, and in
This mist of steadfast lightning hung
The cup itself, deep ruby, seething
Rose, fire-bloody, beating like a star—
Or like the heart of him who gave
Its color from his wounds. Split
The thick Earth its eastern rind,
And through this window of traced rocks
The dawn was seen beyond the night
Flushing the glass of space with rose,
And the great rose that lights the sky
Looked in upon them suddenly,
The servant-eye of God, and drew
Those souls toward Him, till it seemed
That deep, round window seethed with forms,
Transfigured, blending into light.
Thus hell escaped itself at last
By might of His twin glory who
Had cleft His way through death, and
Now, once more, He drew near to the
Tomb and sat in morning light
That flickered long and needle-like
To glints and glows of hope,
That grew and flushed the new-cut granite—
Whitened, blazed—yet still a foil
For His transcendent countenance

Which shone from brighter fire within,
As if a lamp from paradise
Were set before the face of day
To show a light more bright than man
Can look upon with usual eyes,
Unless he see that face at last;
Unless he find the very Grail.

Both have been found and kept for us;
Both found, and lost, and found again.
Did not the woman find Him there
That glittering morning by the tomb,
A simple gardener on a stone?—
Until His eyes looked full on them
Whose happiness is wisdom, too;
And His firm lips brought joy again
In every tone replete with hope—
"Mary," he said. And Him she knew.

And in that selfsame hour the Cup of Life
Came to the humble Arimathea's house.
While in the morning hour he more than slept,
Tired with his mortal grief, the cherubim
Who long had faced each other by the Ark,
Guarding the ancient law with triple wings,
Brooding above the glory dwelling there—
They left the temple, and they rent the veil,
Now that the law lived in the flesh at last,
And with them went the light from Zion's house
Forever; went to dwell about the Cup,
That star that burned in Hades for the damned.

It now they seized upon with bidden hands
To bring it back to men again, and now
On wings that do not lean on earthly air,
Past Calvary, to Joseph's house they glide
And like a smoke in moonlight fill the room
With long extended horizontal plumes,
And draperies insensuous flowing up
From nothing, like a flame without a wick,
Tinted like hanging clouds near an eclipse.
They lingered there as if within the mind
Of Arimathea an effulgent dream
Was flowing on and outward into space,
Fed from a fountain that could fill the world,
Which he, its humble conduit, felt, and saw:—
First red dawn on the dark walls of his mind,
Then rose upon the white walls of his room—
Both to his inner and his outer eye,
At once a vision and reality,
The cup, held by the cherubs in a mist,
Bright as the sun's rim from its elements.
All dripping like the beard of a new star
That catches in the mist about the moon
In a conjunction mystic, thus it hung.
Then those cherubic heralds with voices sweet
As those which talk in spring near waterfalls,
Spoke in a strange, unearthly, liquid tongue,
A tongue familiar tho' remembered not,
How he who took the Body to his tomb,
Now in his home should keep the living host;
They laid the trust upon him with its joy.
But now the cherubim depart; grow dim,
Laying long fingers on the carven smile,

Across the arcs of their bright lips,
Sweet molds of accents for all-perfect praise,
That when it sounds not, still the mold remains
Like the arch memory of the dolphin's leap
The soul remembers when the creature's gone.

THE FORGE IN THE FOREST

KING AGOG'S BED

THE FORGE IN THE FOREST

For Padraic Colum

Faint through the whisper of a sea of leaves
On overtones of bird-song came the clink
And chime-tones of the speaking metal cast
On clanking iron by that sooty smith
Whose hammer tossed the echoes down the glades
Where hawks sprang up and circled, when they heard
The iron song of anvils through the hills,
Those dark, dark hills that hid in mist away
The forge amid the forest. Leagues of bogs,
And furious rivers where the fords were few,
And weedy, and forgotten, hedged it round,
And a dim forest full of still and glassy light,
And silences no traveler cared to hear
From mossy cities gaping at the moon—
From altars that the fierce wolf staled upon.

Yet such the art of him who was the smith
Of that rude smithy, half a cavern
And half a cabin leaning to the hill,
That kings came there, leading war horses lamed
By sorry smiths in towns, and bringing gold
To bribe the sweat-streaked muscles of that smith
To shoe their stallions with old-peoples' iron,

Stripped from the bones of temples; melted down
Amid the ruins of a magic time,
Between that world and this—and while the fire
Was plied by stolen urchins, and the glow
Of black, infernal charcoal lit the place,
Glinting upon coat armor and the shields—
Those mighty ones stood muttering Christian prayers
Off-shaking sparks that singed their royal beards,
Looking askance upon the limping smith
At times he raised the stallions' hairy hoofs
To fit the iron that sizzled on the bone.
For these were magic horseshoes, never cast
At times inopportune, they bore a horse
Through shield-walls to the banner of the foe,
And it was said by clerks who dwelt far-off
And read the names of devils with their eyes,
This smith was one "King Vulcan" come upon
An evil day for him, and forced to shoe
The animals of Christians at his forge,
Or starve for lack of something in his veins.
But those who rode to victory on his art
Smiled when they heard this cloister-talk, and said,
"The holy hermits call him Wayland Smith;
Kings' heads are on the gold he gets for wage."

KING AGOG'S BED

Lucky were the giants in the land of Og;
Lucky was the king of them, King Agog:

He had a bed
Whereupon to lay his sleepy head,
A bed where slumber throve.
Three cubits was the width,
And nine the length thereof.

Four posts there were,
Two cedar trees at either end,
To hold the royal giant up, and fair
Were the golden cupidons
That held the canopy above his head,
Looking four ways across the bed,
All carved like chessmen's pawns.

There was a cover stuffed
With ring-dove's feathers,
And a pillow ruffed,
Wherewith to keep him warm
From winter weathers,
And a whale-tooth charm.

God knows, it was a mighty bed!
Right well upthrust upon its posts,
A royal cedar couch fit for the leader
Of the heathen hosts.
Thereon this king of giants laid his head,
And laid his giant bride when she was wed,
And laid his huge bodie when he was dead.

EPITHALAMIUM

EPITHALAMIUM

Kept like a secret by a cloudy wood
Of birches and the gloomy, gabled pine
A white porched temple of the Muses stood
Traced with the rambling gesture of a vine,
Lifting its dreamful pillars with an ease
That mocked the living columns of the trees.

Time, as if waiting, touched its antique grace
With wands of gentle rain, or on it smote
The scepter of the sun through glossy space,
Or owl-lured fingers of the moon would gloat
Along its frieze like pearls about a throat
That trembles, yet withholds the hoped-for note.

Cloistered within, the pallid muses stood
Three on three sides, in niches nine and tall,
Silent as snowbound travelers in a wood
Masqued Drama gazed at Music in her stall,
While fingers of the breezes seemed to twitch
Their frozen garments toward a vacant niche.

Empty it gaped against the southern wall,
Graced with foiled fruit and blossoms like a space
Left for a window in a fireless hall,
Framed like a picture lacking form and face—
A hunt without a distant bugle call—

Nine sisters faced it in a muted choir
With tattered spider webs on harp and lyre.

Thus, in a silent vision, calm they stood,
A dream too beautiful to tell at morning,
Without, the earliest thrush sat in the wood,
Warming her eggs with hope, yet music scorning,
While time broke little berries from the holly
And silence whispered through the hood of melancholy.

No sound was there. The snowbird's throat was still.
The brook fled silent down the frozen hill.
No voice claimed echo for an heir
As yet—until—

A soft conspiracy of wind and weather
Tangled the swelling roots of March together
To trip the feet of April on a day
When she should pause within the wood to play.
Like morning mist the snowbanks shrank away
As if a milkmaid's smock, or spattered cream,
Dried in the sunlight where the birches dream
Amid the bracken by a melting stream.

So warmth came to the wood, save in one corner
In a small shady swale that seemed to scorn her,
Where the stark shadow of an oak tree lay,
Which shrank from dawn to noon; grew through the afternoon
And cherished thus a snowbank day by day
For almost half a moon, that else would melt away

Like all the others, and be gone too soon,
Where snowbanks go before the May.

Too soon—for to the wood-thing's tender eyes
That place was like a thawing paradise.
Beside the cool and ever-shrinking bank
Of snow the tenant flowers blew and drank
A rainbow atmosphere of freshest dew;
In a half-frosty haze arbutus grew—
Violets that followed when the bright snow shrank
Until—one patch lay like a shroud on something
still.

About were flowers. And the birds came too,
Bobbing prim little curtsies, as birds do.
It seemed beneath the snow that someone dreamed—
Or slept. Backward the snowbank crept,
Showing a foot whose web of veins was blue—
As if with blood of violets—in a shoe
Made of a fleecy dock leaf, like a stud
Of blue-veined ivory in an emerald bud—
Or so it seemed.

Wonder of wonders, when the snow left, there
Lay the young Spring herself! Her hair
Was sheathed in grasses, and took root.
Her fingers sank in mosses. She was bound
By veins and purple tendrils to the ground.
At first, she lay so quiet, pale, and fair
The squirrel from hollow tree came out to stare
And sniffed and flirted round her leafy boot.

Young leaf pods fell upon her, then the sun
Began to warm her and her blood to run
Less blue through all her veins. Her heart
Commenced to beat. From head to feet
She slowly blushed, part into part.
Her blue lips opened and her smooth cheek flushed,
Till on a day she opened up her eyes
Mild with the fluxing dreams of April skies.

Then with a bird-like cry she stirred and rose.
Rose now the color of her lips. Her clothes
Were Eve's. And her long shining hair
Was golden—saving at the very tips,
Where it was yellow-green. Out of the stems it slips
Of long, young grasses that had been a sheaf
For every separate hair that thus drew strength
Out of the ground. And now with lovely length
It whips like tangled seaweed round her hips.

How bright, how darling fair was dear young Spring
There in that shadowy vale I dare not sing.
Her hair like little wires sprang from her brow
Of snow about twin violets, and her tresses
Bent to the wind's invisible caresses.
How did she walk? I cannot quite say how.
Her form was scarce imprinted in the moss
Still warm where she had lain;
Her breasts were tinted with a rose's stain.
My winter palette now is at a loss.

She walked a panther-vision of sure motion
Made with full ease. She seemed to pass

Over the grass as if it were an ocean.
The flowers washed before her in white waves
That broke in foaming purple, and she laves
Her limbs in tinted asters and anemones.
So dips the swallow skimming landlocked seas,
Leaving no trace but ripples on the glass.

And now from vale and hill came bird and beast;
Starlings, and a thousand larks, at least.
The humming birds brought honey for her lips,
And sleepy bears blinked from their cavern trees,
Hearing above the hollow boom of bees
As if their winter house were now a drum
To throb and throb that, "Spring has come, has come!"
The speckled fawns came browsing lily slips;
Darlings of new-born lambs—with these she skips.

The wood resounded with the wise crow's caws.
And blackbirds paused and dropped the last year's haws.
The owl's twin eggs hatched out at blinding noon
While she prepared that night to twit the moon
When it should glimmer in her eyes through larches—
And Spring passed on her way beneath the arches
Of budding trees, in flowers to her knees;
Piped by the birds, and led by woodland boys
With poppy torches, to a joyful noise.

For now a wedding note swelled every forest throat.
The temple seemed on fire, and all its porches
Swirled with slim girls and orioles and torches.

The flowers washed around it when Spring stept
Over the threshold and the statues leapt
Breathing at last as if with breath of her,
Stripping the dusty webs from harp and lyre,
Storming new music from each throat and wire,
As if they lived at last because of her.

And so they do,
And evermore must be
Alive in her
And in her ecstasy,
For Spring, the witch,
Came to abide;
To fill her vacant niche
That was so bare;
To wake the silence there
With minstrelsy
As for a bride.

POEMS ON VARIOUS THEMES

FALL

Crazy poets, cease to praise
Pettish April and her ways.
It will get you no more bays.
Why with borrowed madness sing
Of our lazy western spring?
Not, of course, that I would quarrel
Over subjects for the laurel—
You at least might take one moral,
In a draught of native waters,
Here's the time when reason totters;
Baptized "Autumn," but we call—
Call her by her real name, "Fall,"
Fall the witch of Season's daughters.

"Witch," I said, for she can take
Every shape a witch can make.
Summer finds her like a snake.
Shivers like a startled rose
When about her softly close
Frosty coils that intertwine
With a motion serpentine,
Coil on, coil on; fold in, fold in,
Till upon a meadow golden,
Summer like a flower lies
Underneath her butterflies
With a cobweb on her eyes.

All the leaves in magic fright
Shiver while the birds take flight—
Shiver; hide her from our sight.

Now the torchmen in the wake
Of the southward-flowing snake
Kindle Summer's funeral pyre
In the maples' leaping fire,
And the mountains' amethyst
To the very crest is kissed
By the flame that writhes and seethes
Where the scarlet sumac wreathes.
Hill and hillocks' chilly shoulders
Gather veils while Summer smolders.

But at last when mad October
Sits in ashes brown and sober,
Comes a day of arctic shouting
All the forest's motley flouting.
And the north wind rollicks past,
Stripping woodland spar and mast;
Driving hosts of lisping leaves
To the shelter of the sheaves,
Till the nut trees hear the noise
Of triumphant little boys.

Now the blood of murdered apples
Mantles in the mug and dapples,
And the hardened hearts of pears
Soften at November's prayers—
In the time and for the day
That November stoops to pray
In the versicles of May,

Luring out the last late hummer
With the lie of Indian Summer.

What! Shall lover's excess call
Horrid names at lovely Fall?
"Witch" and "serpent," "liar"—never
Can the poet thus be clever;
Never thus with foolish lore
Lure a lamia to our shore.

Fall, you are an Indian maiden
With the sacred wampum braid on,
Coming through the forest laden
With the tasseled harvest store.
Therefore, Princess brown of hands,
Followed by your warrior bands,
Lady of the shocks and sheaves,
Fire amid the fainting leaves,—
Trip it south through Iroquois lands.
Come, and go, like Pocahontas
Leaving but a glow to haunt us
For a love the soul remembers
Dreaming by December's embers.

BALLAD OF THE FRUITLESS PLANT

A FRUITLESS plant of a sensitive seed
Once grew in a pot where its every need
Was a hope to prevent and a joy to precede
With thoughtful care and skillful speed—
Oh, the fruitless plant of the sensitive seed!

It was trained on a trellis and made to climb;
It was freed of weed, and freed of slime.
And its earliest blossoms, as all agreed,
Were nipped in the bud, so its strength might speed
Through its limbs and leaves, and not to seed.

So there it stood by the garden wall
In an elegant pot, and it grew so tall
That the nursery gardeners, one and all,
Paused as they passed, to admire, and agreed,
'Twas a beautiful plant of a sensitive seed—
A beautiful plant, but no use withal!

If it missed the forest where it grew;
If it missed the wildwood, no one knew,
For the sun poured down, and the rain and dew,
And its leaves grew broad and its tendrils grew
In the cracks of the only wall it knew,
While the days went by and the seasons flew.

Then there came a day and there came an hour
When the fruitless plant attempted to flower,
A feeling at first that its deep roots had
That ran through its branches and made them glad,
Till a leaf turned back and opened its eye,
And a flower looked up at the sun in the sky.

A perfect blossom, it blossomed so high
That the gardener missed it, walking by.
Oh, the fruitless plant with the lovely eye,
The gardener missed it, walking by!

But deep in the pot in the loam and damp
The roots of the plant were gnarled with cramp,
And they split the pot in their thrust for space,
And their trouble showed in the flowers' face,
For they could not answer the whole plant's need
And nourish the blossom to bear the seed.

So it had no scent that the bees would try,
And its petals shrank, and its stem grew dry,
While the burning sun went slowly by.
And that flower fell, without a sound,
And the gardener found it on his round,
Lolling its tongue for a taste of the ground.

Then his face went black with a gardener's wrath,
And he kicked the elegant pot from his path,
And its cracked sides burst, while the gardener
cursed,
For he saw the roots, and he knew the worst—
And he hurled that plant that would not yield
Over the wall on a stony field.

Oh, those were days for the fruitless plant!
It suffered the snail, and it suffered the ant,
The slimy snail, and the busy ant.
Its need was great and its food was scant;
It withered down to the very root;
It was pressed in the earth by a passing boot—
Then the rain came down and it started to shoot.

It had no leaves for a beautiful crown
To please the eye, but its roots put down
In a stony field near an ugly town;
No leaves it had, but its roots put down
In a barren field bv an ugly town.

They split the rock with infinite toil,
They moved the stones, and they found the soil.
They thrust deep down in a mighty coil,
And they even pierced the garden wall,
Though the gardener never knew it all.
He watered his beds, and he gave no heed
To the fruitless plant of the sensitive seed—
So, it fought the mole and it strangled the weed;
But the thoughtful gardener gave no heed.

Till, all at once, with a terrible strength
That it drew from the stones, it sprang at length
Over an oak tree and up the wall,
And its leaves grew broad, and its stem grew tall,
And it locked that oak tree twice about,
And burst into bloom with a mighty shout.

Oh, the bees came by and they loved the scent;
They bent their backs—and away they went!

Then the gardener came, and he stopped and saw
Those magical flowers without a flaw.
They puzzled his brain, so he stopped his jaw
From falling down with a horrible name
That out of a Latin textbook came.
Now he knew the name and he knew the breed
Of the fruitless plant with the sensitive seed.

But a lady pale who used to pace
Up and down that garden space
To ease her heart in a lovely place;
And back and forth as if to win
Forgetfulness of kith and kin,
Bent over those flowers and read their brief
In the scent of their blooms and the shape of their
leaf.

SYLVAN POOR

Ten years have gone, ten years and more,
Since Sylvan sat beside my door,
Displaying with a fatal knack
The geegaws in his mental pack.
Ten years! Both he and they have gone—
Faster than his own tongue ran on.

He had a fawnlike cast of face
That made the preacher doubt his race
When he immersed him into grace—
The water dried and left no trace—
For doubt of Sylvan in him grew
Until he doubted all he knew.

He argued when he was half grown
That nothing could be surely known,
"And if it might be—well, what then?"
He argued with all kinds of men;
He even argued with the women,
A sin that never is forgiven.

He soaped the stairs that lead to Hades
By refutation of the ladies.

This gift of tongues, this talent Greek,
This spark struck out of Turtle Creek,
With it the flint and he the steel
To strike against the common weal,
Was first admired, then overrated;
Then used, abused; then feared, thus hated.

Neighbors, a few, condoned the scars
On tattered wings that beat the bars;
Honored the indomitable Festus
Who tried to kindle the asbestos,
But every Pennsylvania town
Has means of holding Sylvans down.

At Turtle Creek the wisest wights
Preëmpted its riparian rights,
Making it safe from every motion
Of wave or tide in Sylvan's ocean,
Till nothing lacked but bell and candle
To sound alarm, and fire the scandal.

One step across the line called "wrong" . . .
Sylvan would not be with us long.

Just what it was we never knew,
Unfortunate at worst—if true—
"Free love," perhaps? The story grew,
Through Turtle Creek the rumor flew.
Frame houses quivered with excitement
Only increased by an indictment.

And at the trial all he had said
From boyhood gathered to a head
Of evidence which swept the jury
By perjured hearsay to a fury
That criticized for half a year
The judge who thought the case "not clear."

We who remained to tend the looms,
For Sylvan went to make new brooms,
Wondered if they would sweep old floors
As clean as his new metaphors.
Then wonder died like sudden kindness
And Turtle Creek went on in blindness.

Poor Sylvan Poor, poor saint—poor sinner?
Poor Sylvan Poor . . . let's go to dinner!

THE HOUSE BY THE MARSH

No, THERE is never anybody there,
Only a battered memory in its face
Remains like wisdom in a platitude,
Hardly worth while to trace.
Yet on one night of highest altitude
Canopus always comes to satisfy
  Himself with watchdog stare
    And bloodshot eye
That there is never anybody there.

It seems—perhaps—they might come back again,
Who left this grim house staring at the marsh,
Listening to sucking tides day after day;
Listening to clucking marsh hens and the harsh,
Drear wind of autumn—or the calm
Drone of the trade wind, and the psalm
Of moonlight ripples on the fen—
It seems as if they must come back again.

What more than pain would their lost ecstasies
Now be to them if exiled from this ground!
Who left behind mysterious memories
And open doors in rooms without a sound.

Here they lay breast to breast and skull to skull
Striving to prove the garments on their bones
Were not so dead, and not so very dull.
Will they now stay in bed all night with stones?
Whether they come or not I cannot say—

There is a sunken grave.
Someone is waiting till I go away,
Meanwhile the shadows wave—

Like mouths of nothing in this solitude,
The moon of dry hydrangeas makes old lace;
The old house weathers in one attitude,
The fretwork staggering across its face.
And this, the night of his high altitude,
That star will climb the zodiacal stair
To satisfy himself with bloodshot eye
For one short hour in the southern sky
That there *is* never anybody there.

CHICKEN BLOOD

The old black crone beside the fire
Will be awake this Friday night,
Honing an axe—honing, honing—
And a West Indian melody intoning.
For Saturday will bring at early light
The wagons with the chickens from the farm,
And she will taste the last of all delight—
Killing, killing chickens in the court,
The old, dark granny's only sport—
The axe and twitching bodies, and the blood
Upon her hands, splashes on her face like mud
From thick volcanic springs still warm.

To-night she takes the clay pipe from her hair—
Honing, honing—
And lights it by the faggot's orange glare,
Sucking the rank tobacco and the midnight air—
This old West Indian crone—
Drooling, droning, feeling the axe along,
Crooning, moaning an old, old song.

Ah, sweet, to take another being's breath!
So near the grave,
To prove herself alive by dealing death.

To hear the sudden chop, chop, chop,
To see the headless bodies flap and flop—
The piteous chuckling and the chortling
Of her victims and the thrill
Of the axe, and the flash,
And the flap, flap,—*plop*—
And the rows of feathered bodies lying still!

"Ah-eee," she sings and she sighs,
Listening to the mating of the cats, and the cries
Of the owls and the ring
Of the axe that she fingers
With the touch of the harpist, when he lingers
On the last high note—
That is rising in her throat—
She could sing to the axe, she could sing!

FABLE OF THE DOG AND CAT

A PUP and kitten raised together
For some time found the social weather
Salubrious as one might wish
And ate together from one dish.
But later on they realized that
One was a dog, the other cat;
And their enlightenment was such
The weather altered very much.
The dog, in short, grew large and larger;
Snapped at the cat and tried to charge her.
Still small, although she grew aloof,
Puss took to dwelling on the roof.
To compensate for fortune's arrows,
Slaughter occurred among the sparrows,
And while below the dog would whine
The cat upon the roof would dine.
For puss, though passing eloquent
When big with earthly discontent,
Shrank heavenwards when words were spent.
Thus always taking higher ground
That needs no argument in sound,
She sate, and learned to contemplate
The dog upon his lowly round.
Whether it was his discontent—
Or an ironical intent

In feathers wafted down to him—
The dog, and not the cat, grew thin.
Almost a lifetime thoughtfully spent
In gazing at the firmament,
And cats, revealed in nature's laws
No reason for the saving clause.
Moved by no heavenly dispensation
To grounds of doglike compensation,
Puss kept the roof and with the stars
Smoked metaphorical cigars.

GOAT SONG

THROUGH weeks of clean Atlantic weather
The two kids played all day together,
And though they are but symbols here
Their names may just as well appear.
White "Billy Buttery" was one,
And "Betsy Brown" his sister,
Two baby goats, and they were dear
To their own mother grazing near,
And they cried when they missed her.

You'd think that such a foolish noise
Would be the kind that just annoys—
And we tried not to listen—
But there was something in the tone
That made the wisest feel alone,
And sorry for existin'.

That much there was in common, then,
Still—they were goats and we were men—
Both quite unlike each other,
So what it was that spanned our ken
Was something to discover.

Just what that "spanner" was obsessed
My giddy intellect, I'm blest,
If I knew more than you, man!

No answer came; the goats addressed
Themselves to gamboling and incest,
And that, of course, was human.

That turned the laugh, but not the key,
Still there was something kept from me;
Yet I was left to wonder,
On problems that I might suspect
The scientific intellect
Is scarcely like to blunder.

For chance it was in "Spike," the dog,
That cleared my problem of its fog
(He used no logarithms)
Yet he was able to detect
What might escape your intellect
By his own doggy rhythms.

The time had come to separate
The kids from that delicious state
On which most kids have thriven;
Soon they were tethered to a stake,
Where martyr-like they met their fate,
Bleating to helpless heaven.

O St. Bartholomew! what "bahs"!
What human syllables, what "ma's!"
The dog set up a whining!
And much to my august surprise
The tears ran down out of my eyes,
And needed no defining.

You see we all were on one isle,
The goats, the dog, and I—you smile—
But there we were, and mile on mile
Of nerveless stuff about us;
The huge Atlantic on the bars
Moaned to the vaster sea of stars,
The very winds would flout us.

I simply mean we were on earth
And that's no moving cause for mirth,
Unless you're father antic.
And if you are, don't laugh at me;
Go laugh with the Atlantic.

You'll find your little motion
Is tabled by the ocean,
And no one in the ceiling
Will palpitate with *feeling*.

DROWNED SAILOR

Always I saw the light
Flashing like clean renown,
Beating up from the bay,
Just where the fields dip down,
And the road glides up to the tree,
And the stairs go down to the sea.

Strange! I should meet them there,
Just where the curlews call,
Bringing him up the stair,
Covered with crow-black pall,
When his face was dark with the sleep
That is slept in the lightless deep.

For now I know why the light
Flashes up where the fields dip down;
For the sea has a heart like night;
And it's true that the little town
Waits for its vanished ships
With a bitter cup at its lips.

And the low, sad cry of the wind,
And the sound of the ancient sea,
And the grief in the harbor bells
Comes out of the soul in me.

INDIAN SPRING

As the long night comes on
The final twilight thickens in old eyes,
And though the spring came earlier this year,
Winter seemed longer and the days more drear.

But in the fern-light greenery of the heart
There lives a springtime that no frost can kill;
The lilacs bloom along old ways,
And the discreet music of subdued old Pan
Is heard there still.
For he has piped there now these seventy years—
Piped even when the fountains ran with tears.

"Styles change," the old lips say.
"Styles even change in roses—in my day
It was *Old Cottage Rose* or else *Rêve d'or.*
Now *Maiden Blushes* have gone out,
Who plants *Old Gold of Ophir* any more?"
No one, perhaps, but memory, yet until
The Gardener with his shears prunes out the heart,
The old-fashioned roses bloom there still,
Nor roots, nor thorns, nor fragrance can depart.

Love hears the whirr of wings about the eaves
Of his deserted dovecotes, through the leaves

Of vanished seasons, as the light grows thin,
Lost voices speak there in that garden that receives
Bright spirits, where the world has never been.

So the long night comes on—
And final twilight gathers in old eyes,
While one dim boat waits on the low lagoon.
Styles change for souls like roses, but, my dear,
We know before you go—
Yours will remain with us like *Constant June*.

FIRST AND SECOND SIGHT

I saw in a moment of second sight
A spirit flash out of the sea;
It stood in a garment of water and light
And held out its arms to me.

And my soul glanced out of a dark eclipse
As the sun when it passes the moon,
While that spirit sang with its bloodless lips
A song to a merman's tune.

Oh, never before in a dream by the shore
Came a spirit thus from the sea!
And never again in the world of men
Will a miracle happen to me

Love, the infant heavenly-wise,
Thus begotten through my eyes,
Leaped unborn within my breast
Where his head shall never rest.

SOUTHWARD HO

Let us go forth to southern kingdoms far
Beyond the storm-vexed harbors that we know;
Sink the cold constellations star by star
Until the last familiar lights shall glow
Only in dreams—while we go hand in hand
Where romance falls like firelight on dark faces
Encamped at evening in a flowered land
Under the towered hold of vanished races.

Old troubles caught in that reflected flame
Would tangle with young moonbeams in your hair
And lose themselves amid your vine-wreathed curls
Like shadows that crisp daffodils ensnare.
And we should tell fond wishes down dark wells
Where starlight trembles to the temple bells,
And listen to cool echoes lisp your name
Like Krishna whispering after village girls.

PSYCHE

A poem written by the ghost of the Autocrat of the Breakfast Table on the occasion of a butterfly's leaving its cocoon.

ALL winter swung the gray cocoon
Wherein the life that was in swoon
Forgot the sun and stars and moon.
Yet long before the robins sing
Something without was shaping wing—
And wing against the coming spring.

The spinning worm that ceased to creep
Lay wrapped in an alchemic sleep
That wrought a mystery so deep,
Her nature and her shape dissolved
While life from shapeless mass evolved
The creature which the urge resolved.

While April wept her life away
And died with smiles to welcome May,
The potter finished with his clay.
The wings were ready for the spring—
Psyche emerged to faintly cling,
A feeble but a glorious thing.

Through tiny labyrinths began
Her strength to course, and span by span
Her wings unfolded like a fan.
Her membranes flushed as they unrolled,
From every dusty crease and fold
Drooped microscopic plumes of gold.

At first she trailed her noiseless skirt,
Then, with a flutter and a flirt,
She flew and found she took no hurt.
Across the fields she glanced away,
Forgetting sluggish yesterday
Where wingèd things delight to play.

Summer will find her in the bowers,
And she will shelter from its showers
Deep in the drooping domes of flowers.
And she will let a lover cling
In ecstasy with quiet wing,
And thus preserve the hope of spring.

And though in some autumnal dawn
Her golden shade desert the lawn,
How shall we say that she has gone?
When all her lilting life confirms
The hope of life in other terms
In cycles that have done with worms.

THE STARLING AND THE MAPGIE

"Time is a magpie, darling,
Memory's a starling."

Time builds his nest upon a crest
Of mountains in the past.
There year by year
He carries everything
We love, and gloats—
On every sparkling tear,
The lost pearl from your ring
Your flowers that died,
Our little paper boats
With pebbles stored
That sailed downstream
Into the past—
They all are in his hoard.
What is there that he does not hide?
Only the starling in a dream
Comes back at last
To cry, "Remember!"

Remember the little hat
With pheasant wing
That made you seem
About to sing—

You wore to make you look mature,
That now slips into literature—
Remember that?

Remember the little lamb
Of wobbly limb
Poor Peter Tinckleton
That bleated for his dam,
The little simpleton!
And tried to butt the dog—
Remember him?

And the tiny horse
All wet with pearls
That paced sedately on your breast,
Or pinned your hat upon your curls—
His garnet eye burned like an ember—
Do you remember?

Ah! you will not forget these things
The magpie stole!
Even in the last days of bleak December
Starlings will come with sudden wings
And hover over you, my lover,
To bring back springtime to your soul
Crying, "Remember!"

"*Time is a magpie, darling;*
Memory's a starling."

LINES ON THE IMAGINATION

PREDICAMENT

I

Tell me, spirit of the time,
Is there nothing still sublime
Left for meter and for rhyme?
Is there not an attitude
Left for proud similitude
To assume with gratitude?
Must the habit of the mole
Undermining root and bole
Lose the vision of the whole?
Always "how," and never "why,"
Categories till we sigh,
Catalogues until we die!
While the power of reflection
Hates the comfort of connection;
Trusts the rudder for direction,
Till a world of separate things
Stills imagination's wings;
Kills the bird before it sings.

II

Without questing from the mart,
Where the hunters sell the hart,
Never, never shall you start

In the lonely melancholy
Of the forests' dewy holly,
Deer that crop the holy moly;
Or the stag that never dies
With the moon upon his eyes,
From the thicket where he lies.
You, a hunter still forlorn,
Coursing rabbits through the thorn,
You will wind upon your horn
Morts for separate mysteries,
Hamadryads slain in trees,
Sprites that spritely fancy sees,
While imagination's notion
Finds in every leaf's commotion
Tides and moons that move the ocean.

III

Poets of the thoughtful rhyme,
Men and women still sublime,
Spirits not of any time,
To your inner ear give heed
Lest the quickening in the seed
Perish as a garden weed.
Lest the shapes that for the crowd
Change and vanished like a cloud,
Cease to be with tongues endowed,
Till no whispering symbols fling
Forms upon the living spring
That gives life to everything.

Think not every crow that caws
Discontent upon the haws
Only chides at farmers' laws.
Though by earthly hunger torn,
Louder sounds a loftier scorn
When his shadow leaves the corn.

LEAVES[1]

THE time is autumn, and the leaves
Take any wind to float them down
Unnoticed through the country lanes,
Raked up for burning in the town.

A lavish April swelled their pride
And made them scornful of the tree,
So autumn finds them quick to fade,
And when they fall, fall heavily.

But early, hasty flight has lost
Them sheen of color winter brings;
Their surface color beds in green
Too callow to abide the frost.

Why bring them home? We know that they
Were only hurried by a breeze;
Poor motleys, they will soon be lonely
In patterns of yesterday.

And yet when summer woods were lush
They tapped the earth through trunk and stem,
And from the sky the dew entrapped
When full moons waked the liquid thrush.

---

[1] "These little books of poetry that float past us like so many autumn leaves . . ."

—Anon. review.

And from high boughs all day looked down
On stream that bled to fill the sea;
Or up at shape of cloudy dream;
And this seems curious to me.

There is no leaf on any bough
That grieves now with the voice of streams,
Or fixes color that retrieves
Midsummer and its fluxing dreams—

There is no leaf from April glee
Caught strength to wait till winter came
To take full color breadth by length—
No, not a leaf on any tree!

And so these early autumn leaves
On every wind are floating down,
Unheeded through the country lanes,
Raked up for burning in the town.

REGRETS FOR LOST STARS

"It is now possible to sit down with pencil and paper and figure out the exact state of matter in the center of the remotest stars."—LECTURE ON ASTRONOMY.

"...yet there are certain epochs of the intellect whose associations are so humanly beautiful as to cause their passing to be a legitimate theme for regret by all but mathematicians...."
From "RECOLLECTIONS OF CLIO" (quoted by permission).

ONCE the arch of heaven thronged
In the morning of the prime
With the legends that belonged
To the stars that sang for Time.

Then on earth each poet's face
Was a mirror for their fires—
While their names still sweetened space
Like the rapture of their choirs.

Now those names are scarcely names,
And their fiery secrets known
Are but colors in the flames,
Not archangels 'round a throne.

Had they left us such as these
From their ceaseless questions free:—
Rigel, Vega, Betelgeuse,
And the bright Alcione—

Then with every dark returning,
Glory from the night would stream
Like the lamp of Psyche burning . . .
But not waken from the dream.

GEMINI

Curving between two sympathetic suns,
Where time plods slower in an ampler space,
A cloudy star its comet-orbit runs,
The twin suns staring, one on either face.

One is so old it sleeps in fiery mists;
And one electric-blue within a pod
Of darker lightnings that with veils encysts
A vision bright'ning like the brain of God.

Ever between them runs that cloud-smooth star,
A bead upon the string of gravity,
Whose isles Saturnian bask subnebular,
Reverberating with fertility.

Its fruits I dream of, lush from steaming lands:
Apples like melons, grapes like apples here;
Its pears I feel laid heavy in my hands,
Smooth with the ripeness of a double year.

There on a tropic continent's vast promontory,
Dazzled by splendid seas that never sleep,
Sits like the monster of an epic story
A dark, gigantic shepherd of huge sheep.

For him no day grows brighter toward the noon;
No afternoon pales slowly into night;
Red woods unvisited by any moon
Stand glittering in valleys mad with light.

"Darkness" is thought, but no one knows its boon.
In the long chaleur of the vibrant heat,
The light-drenched vines caduceus-like festoon
The staff that lies beside that shepherd's feet.

He never drove his flock home by the stars,
And mariners who ply those nightless seas
Steer by the shifting angle in the bars
Of light through which that planet ever flees,

While the tide currents up one epoch run,
And ebb another æon, as the slow
Curve of that planet takes it towards one sun,
Swings it forever—and then lets it go.

Till its hot oceans slowly shift again,
A half note in a rhythm set so vast
That all the generations of Earth's men
Will never live one bar of it at last.

Yet, can we think it, music not for ears,
And in that music we are not mistaken,
For the imagination overhears
Diapasons by which that star is shaken.

CLIO

When I first loved, I loved a wraith,
Yet in my youth I still have faith,
For though dark mills were thundering 'round
I met my love on Roman ground.
Through her I learned to know the peace
Of balance, journeying through Greece,
Then stars above Arabia's dearth
Brought unity to my vexed earth,
And while in England, hand in hand,
I learned to love the love of land,
And everything was in her kiss
My starving city did not miss.

For she was lovely, thin and lithe,
And supple as a willow withe,
Although her youth was very old,
And many an ancient tale she told
Of lands that I might never see,
Of vales in far-off Thessaly,
Of Umbria and Sicily,
Of Attica and Arcady,
Of men who were God's instruments
And never walking documents.

Thick walls and curtains we passed through,
A boy, I saw what lovers do,
And knew that I should be one, too.
In eagle-vallumed camps we saw
The laureled Cæsars saying law;
We saw in Alexandria's dives
Religion forged to bind our lives,
And up the Nile on monoliths
We found the mother of its myths—
And tarried for a little while
With Isis on her drowning isle.

No one who lived within our house
Suspected that a little mouse
Had found the pantry of the gods
And nibbled there at lotus pods;
No one within our city wall,
And it was very thick and tall,
Suspected it—at all, at all.

Yet every night I used to meet
My love between a double sheet,
And kiss her mouth, and found it sweet,
And kiss her hands, and kiss her feet.

But that was in another æon.
Now Clio is a pedant's peon,
And she wears glasses and a smock
And orders life upon the clock,
Or makes a budget out of blood,
While love is reason's breeding stud.

And all her breasts have fallen in;
Her face is like a parchment skin
With nothing lovely writ therein.
To lie with her would be a sin.

So I behold her now with tears
And long to box her on the ears,
For she no longer is a joy,
The passionate sweetheart of a boy.
In truth, she's not the girl at all
I met beside the Roman wall,
Where through the harvest mist of years
Twinkled the vexillaries' spears.

ILLEGITIMATE

WHERE the common chickens strutted,
Pecking, scratching restlessly amid the stone,
He came, the golden pheasant and a thing of flame,
And lived, we thought, alone—
Altho' at night among the rest he hutted.
And then he left again for forests and the ways of air,
Gone as a flame goes, none knew where.

But one gray hen laid hidden eggs,
And when they hatched
Her chicks were different,
Dizened with spots of flame and golden thatched,
Trusting their wings more than their legs.

Only the farmer grumbled, weaving a netted hood
Across their little patch of sky
To curb the wingèd ones that wandered to the wood.

THE ROSE IN AMBER

This rose in amber bloomed when earth was young,
When man was not yet here, perhaps, or blind,
A thought of perfect beauty dwelt upon
Once by the natural mind.

So may our poems be in days to come
When all the winds that stir their leaves are dumb.
Ephemeral perfume they need not distill;
No one will care to ask what bees they drew,
In what dim summer of the soul they blew.
The rose will be in amber calm and clear.

THE END

Date Due

CAT. NO. 23 233 PRINTED IN U.S.A.

TRENT UNIVERSITY
0 1164 0047512 9

This book sho

PS3501 .L5N4 1929
AUTHOR
Allen, Hervey
TITLE
Two legends, poems
DATE DUE | BORROWER'S NAME
168589

168589

EDGAR H. WELLS & CO
INCORPORATED
41a East 47 · New York